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SHORT SERMONS

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THE SAINTS

BY THE
REV. F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B

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TO

SAINT THÉRÈSE

THE CARMELITE OF LISIEUX

IN GRATITUDE FOR HER HELP AND GUIDANCE

(The last sermon in the volume has this holy nun for its subject)

"THERE is no such effective exhortation to live for heaven and for God as the lives of those who are in heaven already. To read their story, to study their success and their failures, to know what they said and did, to feel the inspiration of their courage, their generosity, and their devotion to Christ—in a word, to enter into their daily lives, whilst, all the time, we are conscious that they are living and reigning in heaven, is the strongest possible corrective of worldliness, of base self-gratification, and of sinful folly."—*The Bishop of Newport.*

PREFACE

I OFFER this volume not only to refresh the memories of priests about Saints whom they have known and loved for years, but also as a book for "spiritual reading" for inmates of convents and the devout laity who may love the stories of the Saints.

Though I have endeavoured to verify facts and statements, errors may have crept in, and I regret them and apologize for them. In such a book I did not deem it necessary to multiply references, which would have to mention many lives of individual Saints, and passages from "Les Vies des Saints," Abbé Giry, Butler's "Lives of the Saints," "The Bollandists," "Pilgrim Walks in Rome," by Rev. P. J. Chandlery, S.J., and others, besides many extracts from the "Fathers."

F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B.

March 10th, 1913.

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The Blessed Virgin Mary

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS

"Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."—LUKE i. 48.

MOST naturally, indeed, in writing of the Saints she should be first thought of who is the Queen of Saints. And this duty is the greater the more the world begrudges honour to the Virgin Mother of God. This spirit of ignoring her and denying her respect and filial devotion is like an icy blast of winter withering up the hearts of men. And where the number of those who know no respect for the Mother of God predominates, this spirit is a real danger to Catholics lest their devotion, amidst such surroundings, should be frost-bitten and perish.

Is it not strange, too, that so many who say they hold so strictly to the Bible, should speak in such a frigid tone of the Virgin Mary, begrudging her a title of courtesy or respect—viz., the blessed, the most holy, or the Mother of God? Why do they ignore the Angel's greeting? "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women" (Luke i. 28). And does their Bible leave any doubt that she should be most dutifully styled the Mother of God? Indeed, no! "Behold, thou shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus," said the Angel.

" He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father . . . and of His Kingdom there shall be no end " (*Ibid.*, 31, 32).

Another witness speaks in the Scripture likewise: " And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed, because these things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord " (*Ibid.*, 41, 45).

Moreover, the blessed Virgin herself gives testimony, and its record is found in the Bible: " Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed: because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name " (*Ibid.*, 48, 49).

At Bethlehem an Angel could sound forth her praise, when he addressed the shepherds: " This day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord." And when the Child was presented in the Temple, Simeon (" and the Holy Ghost was in him ") took Him into his arms, and blessed God, saying: " My eyes have seen Thy salvation " (Luke ii. 25-30).

Are we not taught also in Holy Writ that this most specially privileged and blessed Virgin-Mother of the Saviour is not someone aloof and apart from us, poor sinners though we be ? We are near and dear to her, as she should be near and dear to us by our love and devotedness to her. She had another calling besides being the Mother of our Saviour, for, says the Gospel: " When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He said to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother " (John

xix. 26, 27). Who doubts that John stood there the representative of all who believe in Christ? This the Church has always held and taught. This has been the hope of so many million repentant sinners, thanking God that they have a Mother to plead in their behalf. Mary draws us all to Jesus; the Mother to the Son! Find a Saint, if possible, who has not cherished a tender devotion towards, and trust in, the blessed Virgin Mary.

There is no gap between the reverence paid to her in Scripture and the reverence offered her by the Church. Devotion to her is no mere modern devotion, born of ignorance and superstition, as the enemies of the Church would have us think. The Blessed Mother has been with the Church always, as she was with the Apostles during those days when they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts i. 14).

John the Evangelist took her to his own (John xix. 27). His disciples would see, and know, and love our Blessed Lady—the earliest of the clients of Mary! St. Irenæus is the first to write of her, and he was the disciple of St. Polycarp, who was the friend of St. John. Even Protestant authors agree that St. Irenæus teaches the same doctrine that the Catholic Church holds to-day. "The Virgin Mary is made the advocate of the children of Eve." Thus from the earliest traditions of the Church, we learn that we are safe in the practice of honouring and invoking this Holy Virgin. St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us that the blessed Virgin and St. John the Evangelist appeared to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus in the year 244, and delivered to him a creed, which afterwards preserved the Church of Neocæsaria from the Arian heresy.

In the early ages festivals were kept in her honour, that of the Assumption certainly in the fifth and sixth centuries. For instance, on this festival in the year 428, St. Proclus delivered his great sermon against Nestorius, proving the Virgin-Mother to be the Mother of God. As soon as liberty was granted to erect churches, they were built and dedicated to the Mother of God; for instance, the great church of Ephesus bore her name, when the General Council was held there in 431, and St. Mary Majors at Rome was consecrated about 433.

Devotion to our Blessed Lady a modern devotion indeed! Would that we could emulate the glowing language of the piety and faith of the olden days! One thousand five hundred years ago, St. Cyril cried out: "Hail, O Mary, Mother of God, rich treasure of the world; crown of virginity; sceptre of true devotion; temple which cannot fall, the residence of Him, Whom no place can contain; Mother and Virgin, by Whom He is, Who cometh blessed in the name of the Lord." And St. Augustine addresses our Lady thus: "For thou art the only hope of sinners! Through thee we hope for the pardon of our crimes, and in thee we place the blessed expectation of rewards hereafter."

Not only is she held in veneration by the Church on earth; is she not the Queen of Heaven? The Mother of God is enthroned there pre-eminent over Angels and Saints. The Angels fall down and worship that God Who was pleased to call her Mother! The Saints have experienced her help and mediation, leading them on in sanctity, which has now been crowned in glory. By praying to her, by imitating her virtues, by childlike trust in her, by venerating her in

every way on earth, they have made themselves worthy to be with her and honour her for all eternity. Not as they honour the Almighty God, indeed; no, but in honouring her they honour Him in His most wonderful creation of purity, love, and grace—His own Blessed Mother, the Queen of Saints.

The Blessed Virgin Mary

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND LOURDES

"This law is not made for thee, but for all others."—ESTHER XV. 13.

ABOVE all the Saints our Blessed Lady enjoys one unique and glorious privilege. All humanity humbly confesses: "In sin did my mother conceive me." But not so our Blessed Lady. Out of respect for her high calling to be the Mother of God, she was preserved from the contamination of sin, even from the first instant of her existence. The Immaculate Conception has always been believed in and reverenced by the Church. "Out of reverence and for the honour which is due to her Son, I will have no question put about her, when we speak of any sin," says St. Augustine.

But we need not go back to the days of antiquity, when the Immaculate Conception was merely a matter of pious belief, because in our own days—1854—we have been so singularly favoured by its being decreed to be an article of faith. Pope Pius IX., of glorious memory even if it were for this one act, solemnly declared the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma of the faith, which every child of the Church is bound to accept.

And why was this? The spirit of the world growing more sceptical and unbelieving, refusing credence

to anything that it could not understand, there was an increasing danger that Catholics themselves might be carried away by the flood of infidelity and contempt of that which was pure and spiritual; therefore, to the joy of the devout, to the strengthening of the weak and cowardly, to the discomfiture of the enemies of the Church, the decree was promulgated. This redounded to the honour and glory of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—and to the exaltation of her who had been chosen to be the Mother of God. It gave a wonderful impulse to the revival of devotion to our Blessed Lady, and to piety and holy endeavour amongst the children of the Church.

But what said the world at large? How was the declaration received by unbelievers? Scoffs and sneers, blasphemies perchance, ridicule, that the Pope of Rome should presume to think that his word mattered — and then the whole affair to be forgotten!

Not so. Almighty God had meant this declaration of the Immaculate Conception to add honour and veneration to the Mother of Christ, and what God had purposed could not be nullified by the pride and spiritual ignorance of the world. God's ways are not as the ways of man. Men demanded signs from our Blessed Lord to prove the truth of His words; and He gave them signs. And His miracles—curing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead to life—yea, and even feeding them with the loaves that He had blessed and multiplied—worked up such enthusiasm amongst the people that they would have taken Him and made Him King. Did not His enemies, the Pharisees, own, in the bitterness of their envy, "Behold the whole world has gone after Him?" (John xii. 19).

Though countless miracles have been piously attributed to our Lady's intervention from the earliest times, it was in February, 1858, that she began to reveal herself as a wonder-worker before a world that denies miracles as an impossibility, declaring that "they have no place in the scheme of human affairs." Recall those apparitions at Lourdes! Who was it that appeared? The Immaculate Virgin herself. She said: "I am the Immaculate Conception." This was a challenge, then, to unbelief. Miracles had to be a proof for the Mother, as they had been for the Son, "to an unbelieving generation!"

A poor, out-of-the-way, unknown village was the scene; a peasant child to be the apostle of the Virgin Immaculate! Contrast that child obediently seeking the source of the stream, hidden with fallen leaves, and Lourdes now, with its waters, grotto, and basilica! No human aid, nor money, nor influence started this marvellous change. Even good people, even the Church, hesitated and hung back at first, to make security sure that these apparitions were the work of God. Yet the work went on as our Lady had directed —a church was built, her statue erected, pilgrims came, and the waters brought blessings to many who prayed. We need not insist on this or that cure being actually a miracle, though all possible care is taken to verify facts by a number of medical men. About two hundred cures are wrought each year. As Pope Leo XIII. wrote: "The Holy Virgin, Mother of God, manifests at Lourdes, in the most striking manner, the power of her help and the tenderness of her maternal heart in favour of the needy and unhappy." What sadness has been turned into joy! What pains and weary anguish have vanished at the power-giving touch of

health! What rescues from the shadow of death have taken place at Lourdes!

And what of the religious aspect? The cures of the soul, the opening of eyes blind to the faith, the cleansing of the leprosy of sin! Ah! in heaven there is a record of the prayers, rosaries, the Holy Communions, the Masses, the processions of the Blessed Sacrament that have taken place at Lourdes these fifty years and more. Add to them the prayers, novenas, communions all over the world by pious men and women who cannot make the pilgrimage, but whose hearts are full of love and confidence towards Mary Immaculate.

If any one can be found—and, alas! it is to be feared that there are many such—who disregard all this manifestation of piety, and ignorantly refuses to admit the miracles, will he explain how it is that from all over the world people are impelled to visit Lourdes? For instance, one pilgrimage of men only numbered sixty thousand! And is not this fact something as wonderful as a miracle, that the railway annually carries over a million pilgrims to Lourdes?

Has not Lourdes, then, vindicated our Lady's title of Immaculate? What honour, glory, and devotedness have been offered to our Blessed Lady! And the enemies of the Church are struck dumb, for they would dearly like to say: "Oh, all this is worship of the Virgin Mary; Christ is forgotten." How very opposite to the truth is this! The blessed Virgin began the devotions at Lourdes, invented the place, if we may so word it; but the chief devotions are the Mass, Holy Communion, and processions of the Blessed Sacrament. Mary loves to lead us to Jesus. And perhaps more cures take place when the Bishop passes

by, carrying the Blessed Sacrament, and blessing the poor stricken ones around, than happen at the waters. And a beautiful thought occurs to us as we read of these merciful cures, and it is this : not only are the pious and holy ones thought of by our good Mother, but there are so many cases of the indifferent, the negligent, the bad Catholics being cured or converted, that our hearts are filled with trustfulness " that no one ever had recourse to her without obtaining relief " for afflicted body or, still worse, afflicted soul.

The Blessed Virgin Mary

THE ROSARY AND ST. DOMINIC

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us."—JOHN i. 14.

IT was not the design of the All-Wise God that the Incarnation should merely be a transient phase for the thirty-three years of Christ's life, and then become a traditional memory, which should fade away as the years rolled by until it might be lost in the twilight of fable. No; the Word was made flesh to dwell amongst us! The Holy Eucharist perpetuates the Incarnation.

But even with His Divine Presence in the Blessed Sacrament our good Lord was not content; He would fain dwell in the hearts of men by memory and by love. "He dwells in our memory, He dwells in our thoughts," says St. Bernard, "because He has made Himself so that our imagination can look upon Him." And how? you will say. Forsooth, lying in the manger, resting on His Mother's bosom, preaching on the mount, spending the night in prayer, hanging on the Cross, rising from the dead, showing the places of the nails—the signs of His victory—to His disciples, and, lastly, in their presence ascending to the heights of heaven. Which of these pictures can we not contemplate truly, holily, and devoutly? By remember-

ing these mysteries the Word dwells in our heart. By remembering we love; and loving, we remember the more!

Is not this the very object of the most Holy Rosary? To bring before our minds the mysteries of our Faith, and by devout prayers to learn to love them. And whom do we take as our teacher and our guide but Mary, the Mother of God, who "kept all these words in her heart" (Luke ii. 51). Mary, who destroys all heresies; Mary, who guards the Word made flesh in her Mother's arms!

From early times the illiterate repeated "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" instead of the Psalms and other prayers, which they could not follow. But the method of weaving various mysteries of the faith with the recitation of decades of "Hail Marys" is ascribed to St. Dominic. It was his aim to remind men of the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord, and to stir up devotion to that which was, at his time, so impiously blasphemed by many heretics, especially the Albigenses in the South of France. All other means failing, Dominic, the great preacher and renowned servant of God, was sent to stem the flood of licentiousness and infidelity let loose by these heretics; but the Saint made little way against these heretics until our Lady bade him preach the Rosary. Harsh, repressive measures had failed, an army merely butchered them, but the Holy Rosary subdued them. Doctrine and prayer went hand in hand in preaching and repeating the Rosary. Christ came and dwelt in their hearts by memory and love, as they learned of the message of the Angel and the humility of the handmaid of the Lord; of the charity and lowliness of Mary in the Visitation—a token how she cares for and helps poor

sinners; the mystery of the stable of Bethlehem, and entering in they adored; of how the Child was presented to His Eternal Father, and obedience was to be the work of His life; how He was found by His sorrowing Mother in the Temple, the type of the true Church, to which they themselves were being recalled. And they learned of the Passion, and pity for that suffering Saviour in His agony—scourged, crowned with thorns; struggling bravely on with the Cross on His shoulder—brought them to His feet on Calvary, where He died to redeem them. And then the hope and comfort strengthened and consoled their repentant hearts as they learned to realize the victory of the Resurrection, the glory of the Ascension, the divinity of the Church strengthened by the coming of the Holy Ghost, the triumph of the Virgin-Mother, and the glory and eternal reward of the faithful.

In how many countless hearts has the Incarnation been realized and Christ our Lord been brought to dwell through the Holy Rosary? And what of the glory of him, who was chosen by Mary to spread this devotion, to popularize it, to make it loved by the hearts of the faithful with such an enduring devotedness that even now—seven hundred years after—when the Church is in sore need, the Sovereign Pontiffs can think of no better weapon or defence for the children of the Church than the Holy Rosary?

To impress upon us St. Dominic's zeal for souls, the ardour of his faith, his trustful devotedness to Mary, the good God endowed him with the most miraculous powers. For instance, when dared by the heretics, he did not hesitate to prove the truth of his teaching, to cast his writings in the flames, three times over, and they remained unharmed, whilst the heretical

books were consumed in a moment. When assassins attacked him, forgetful of himself, he spoke so kindly and piously to them that on their knees they begged pardon and became his faithful followers. And that loving miracle when, seeing a poor woman bewailing her lifeless infant on the steps of a church, with one touch of his hand he restored it to life, and placed it, smiling, in the arms of its wonder-struck mother, reveals to us the tenderness of his heart, filled with the loving spirit of Mary our Mother.

But that public and most authentic miracle of the raising to life of the young Count Orsini made the whole of Rome acclaim the sanctity of the founder of the Rosary. Whilst St. Dominic, in the presence of Cardinals and a concourse of the faithful, was welcoming a community of nuns to their new home in the Church of San Sisto, news was hastily announced that Count Orsini, nephew of one of the Cardinals present, had been thrown from his horse, trampled on, and killed. Our Saint bade them bring in the mangled corpse and lay it before the altar. He than said Mass; and at the Elevation, in the sight of all, Host in his hands, he was raised in the air in ecstasy. Mass finished, he approached the corpse, and with a loud voice cried out: "Napoleon Orsini, in the name of Jesus Christ, I command thee to arise." And in a moment the dead arose, alive and sound, and glorified God.

One other miracle he worked which is dear to every client of Mary. A young woman met with a fatal accident, and died without a chance of the last Sacraments. Her friends in their grief hastened to St. Dominic, seeking his aid because she had been a model of devotion to the Holy Rosary. That word was enough. The Saint, arming himself with the Holy

Oils and the Blessed Sacrament, returned with them to where the girl lay dead. With a prayer he recalled her to life that she might receive the Viaticum and Extreme Unction as a reward of her piety, and then, peacefully and happily, she gave up her soul to God. How beautifully had her "Hail Marys" been answered —"now, and at the hour of our death!"

What a revelation once St. Dominic made of his soul! He innocently remarked that he could not remember ever asking God for a favour which he had not obtained. Those around were amazed; but one of them, either jokingly or maliciously, replied, pointing to a well-known character passing by—a worldly-minded, hard-headed lawyer—pray for him that he may become a Friar preacher! St. Dominic said nothing; but that night he poured forth his soul to God, and the Patroness of the Holy Rosary was implored, and next morning that selfsame man came and humbly petitioned to be received into his holy Order.

Do we not all know someone, friend, relative, or companion, for whom we might ask St. Dominic to pray? He will not refuse us, but he will expect us to use the weapon of prayer ourselves. "You have the Rosary," he will say; "use it with faith, with fervour, with perseverance."

Two things will help to make our prayers avail: always have an intention, an object for which to pray. And as we take up our beads, let us raise up the eyes of our soul to St. Dominic, asking him to join his prayer—that never failed—with ours, that Mary and her Child may dwell in our memory and our hearts.

Conversion of Heart

BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

JANUARY 4, 1309

"Our Father Who art in heaven."—MATT. vi. 9.

THOUGH we are drawn to the Saints, and find consolation and encouragement in their lives and labours for God, yet how often have we felt a certain despondency at the contrast between them—the faithful followers of their Master—and ourselves! In our case is it not always only fresh beginnings after repeated failures?

Some of the Saints, who were always innocent, who from their earliest years have been heroic in God's service, seem so far raised above us that, though we may ask their prayers and protection, to emulate their piety and earnestness seems quite beyond our powers.

Others, again, have left the world and shaken themselves free from the trammels of sinfulness at a word—"Follow Me"—and they have done it. Or, as St. Sylvester the Abbot and St. Francis Borgia, beholding the corruption of death in one they had known in life, filled with the holy fear of God, renounced all things and bravely devoted themselves to a life of austerity for Christ's sake. Or others, as Magdalene, repented, and never sinned again! Whereas, we ourselves, how often, and how often, moved by God's grace, have repented, have resolved, have begun a new life, and

have cowardly fallen time after time; the world, the devil, or self being the cause of our abandonment of the good God!

Then how consoling, how strengthening in our weakness to find one amongst the Saints, who once was battling for years—half-heartedly, despondently, and cowardly—exactly as we have done ourselves.

It is not dishonouring blessed Angela of Foligno to introduce her thus; for it is her glory and her joy in heaven now if some poor, timid soul, through her example, is led to break loose from the entanglements of sin and to give themselves unreservedly to God.

Angela was an ordinary married woman. Worldly, no better than others, whose young days had been passed in frivolity and tepidity, if not in sinfulness of a very heinous character. Like others, she got married, and by-and-by the cares and worries of a large family dispelled the glamour of worldliness and pleasures, and the eyes of her soul were opened, and she realized that she was not living as God required of her. She was grieved; meant to change; but remained the same. Naturally the state of her soul grew worse, for she was neglecting God's call and graces, and she tells us she made bad confessions and communions. At last, some very special grace, perhaps a mission, enabled her to break the fetters of bad habits, and she repented. And even now, though contrite, there was a struggle! It seemed so hard to break completely with the past, to say, "Never again will I sin; never again indulge in worldly amusements that might prove dangerous occasions; never to relax, but always, day after day, hour after hour, to be on my guard and live in the presence of God, with the Father's eye always beholding me."

God saw the struggle, and in His mercy helped her; but in His own blessed way, by making her suffer! Sickness and death taught her detachment, and one after the other she lost her mother, her husband, and her sons.

"Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. . . . The world passeth away" (1 John ii. 15, 18). All alone, deprived of all she had loved, Angela, like the prodigal in the Gospel, bethought her of her Heavenly Father. "I will arise and I will go to my Father" (Luke xv. 18). One day, she herself tells us, dejected, contrite, yet hardly able to form a prayer, the "Our Father" came vividly before her mind. She repeated it slowly, devoutly; her heart glowed within her! "I repeated it," she writes, "with such contrition and recollection that, though I was plunged in great anguish at the thought of my sins, I yet received unspeakable consolation."

It was the turning-point of the total conversion of her heart to God. "I have never found a better way for realizing God's mercy than by saying that prayer which Jesus Himself taught us." Her Heavenly Father had stripped her heart of all she loved and cherished to compel it to turn to Him. What a revelation it was to her at last! What had she been seeking after, loving, throwing away her life upon? And all the while her Heavenly Father had been waiting for her in tenderness and pity. He could not dwell in a heart crowded with trivial, foolish, and sinful longings and pleasures; but as soon as that heart was desolate, He bade her seek comfort with Him. What was the world to her and all it could offer now that she realized that she had a Father in heaven? What could interest her here below, when she saw the end for which she

was created was to honour His blessed Name? What was a fleeting, deceitful world, when His kingdom was meant for her eternal home? What were the paltry schemes and longings for short-lived pleasures to being allowed to accomplish His blessed will here on earth as the blessed do in heaven? And strength was promised her to do that will from the daily bread of grace and the Holy Eucharist, and forgiveness of the past was guaranteed and defence in temptation and deliverance from evil. Oh, blessed Angela, by the rapture, by the grace that filled your soul in saying the "Our Father," teach us to reverence and have recourse to that blessed prayer! How grateful henceforth she was that sickness, pain, temptation, loss of those she loved, had taught her the bitter lesson of detachment, and to seek her Father in heaven!

Thus far Angela was one of ourselves; from henceforth, no longer a worldling, but a brave and persevering penitent. Her special devotion was the contemplation of the sufferings of our Blessed Saviour. Day by day this penitent worldling grew in sanctity, so that before she died her writings, especially on the Passion of our Lord, ranked high amongst the revelations of the Saints.

Is not blessed Angela one to make a friend of? Can we not pray earnestly for help and comfort? and can it be possible that she will not—for the sake of our Heavenly Father—be interested in us, watch over us, and intercede for us? Will it not redound to her glory that she had brought others to a true conversion of heart? Half-heartedness will never win heaven for any one of us.

Take her dying words and let us learn them well; "What you have impressed on your heart in life it is

impossible but that the same should be there in death." Each day and hour from her conversion had she been impressing the remembrance of her Father's love upon her heart, and when she came to die it was simply going home to that Father Who was so tenderly awaiting her. Our lips say the prayer frequently enough; would that the remembrance of our Father was imprinted on our hearts, our will longing to be faithful to Him, our soul looking up to be guided by Him, to obey Him, to serve Him loyally! If we learned to do this in life, it would be impossible for us to stray from Him at death, for the Father's arms would be around us, and, dying, we should realize, like blessed Angela, how sweet it is to have a Father in heaven.

Obedience to the Word of God

ST. ANTONY THE HERMIT

JANUARY 17, 356

"If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."—MATT. xix. 21.

THE life of a Saint written by a Saint, and by such a one as the great St. Athanasius, compels attention. We may have very little in common with St. Antony, but we have the Word of God, written and spoken; we may not be called to become anchorets and leave the world, but we are called to fight against temptation and give up sin. Therefore his life not only bids us to honour God for the heroism of His servant, but inflames even the worldly and cowardly to wish to do more for their Divine Master.

Antony was only a youth when his parents died, and he found himself a rich young man left with the care of a younger sister. Always a devout attender at church, he heard read at Mass one day the words of our Lord in the Gospel to the rich young man, in reply to his question: "What must I do that I may have life everlasting?" And Jesus answered: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." The faith and humility of Antony

took the inspired words as directly addressed to himself. His father had brought him up to fear the allurements of the world and the "deceitfulness of riches"; he therefore at once resolved to obey—"go sell what thou hast." But there was his sister to be considered; what would become of her? In his perplexity again the Word of God spoke to him in the church, for the words of the Gospel were read: "Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow" (Matt. vi. 34). He was inspired to place his sister with some holy women who lived in retirement. The first mention of convent life—A.D. 270! And there she dwelt all her life, becoming superior, and dying at an advanced age in great sanctity.

The poor became his heirs, and Antony, bidding adieu to the world, retired to a lonely place to follow his Master. He lived till he was one hundred and five, and solitude was his beloved home. His austerities, his fastings, his long hours of watching in prayer are fit subjects for our humble admiration. Satan, enraged to be foiled by a mere youth, assaulted him with every device of temptation, and was even allowed by God to torture him with blows and wounds, and once left him almost dying; but the invincible fortitude of the Saint enabled him to emerge victorious after every conflict. It comforts us to find that his two great weapons of defence were the invocation of the most holy Name Jesus and the Sign of the Cross. Are we not all bound to imitate him in this, for temptations are the lot of everyone? St. Antony tells us: "The illusions of the devil soon vanish if a man arms himself with the Sign of the Cross. The devils tremble at the Sign of the Cross of our Lord, by which He triumphed over and disarmed them." When the devil appeared

to him, he invoked the holy Name Jesus, and he vanished. "Only by naming Jesus Christ crucified I put to flight the devils, and when the Sign of the Cross is formed they lose their power."

St. Antony longed to be a martyr, and when the persecution of Maximinus (A.D. 311) was revived, he went to Alexandria, hoping to receive his crown. He helped and served the martyrs in the mines, in their dungeons, and strengthened them with his prayers and exhortations at the very place of execution; but his time was not yet, and when the persecution abated, he returned once more to his solitude, humbly thinking himself unworthy to shed his blood for Christ.

His return to Alexandria was to be in a very different manner. Peace had been established for the Church, but heretics took soon the place of persecutors to do battle with the Church. St. Athanasius induced him, after overcoming his humility and reluctance, to come and preach at Alexandria, where he was Bishop, against the Arians. Not only the Christians crowded to hear him, but the very pagans clamoured to see and listen to the venerable servant of God. In his sermons he referred to the holy Name Jesus and the Sign of the Cross, and at the conclusion they brought to him blind and those possessed by devils, and with the holy Name and the Cross he cured them. No wonder, then, that his very demeanour, his words, his miracles produced a marvellous effect, and the whole city mourned when once again he sought his beloved solitude.

But St. Athanasius meanwhile had secured the account of his life; he compiled it, and Providence, in its own mysterious way, brought about its publication far and wide. St. Athanasius was sent into exile.

That banishment was the cause of St. Antony's being known at Rome. The life was copied, spread abroad, preached about, read, and listened to with the greatest avidity. St. Jerome, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. Chrysostom speak of the wonderful fruits of this holy life, and recommend that everyone should know it. Was it not the blessed seed which was to take root and develop into that most noble tree of Monasticism, which was to spread its branches throughout Christendom and flourish through all succeeding ages? The holy youth, taking refuge in the desert, alone for years battling with the enemy of souls, then sought out by hundreds and hundreds anxious to save their souls, the founder of monasteries, the noble example of everyone who longed to obey the Word of God, could not be hidden, but was destined by God to be a shining example in distant countries and through ages yet to come.

How many has his memory urged to better things! How many has his life forced and driven to be courageous and shake off self, and give up the world for Christ's sake! Let one speak for all. St. Augustine writes: "In reading of him, O Lord, Thou didst reveal myself to myself, and show me to my own eyes as what I was—distorted in selfishness, grovelling, unclean, and covered with the ulcers of sin. I saw and I was horrified, but whither could I escape? I could not forget him!" Then the noble resolve overcame self and sin, and, please God, many will say and have said with Augustine, "Where he has gone, are we afraid to follow?"

The obedience to the Word of God, which was the foundation of St. Antony's sanctity, dwelt in his heart all his life long. When the Emperor Constantine

wrote to him and asked his prayers for himself and his sons, the monks expressed their surprise that the Emperor should write to a hermit. "Wonder not at this," replied St. Antony, "that a man should write to a man, when God Himself has written to us and spoken to us in the Holy Scriptures." That was the infinite condescension that called for all his veneration and obedience. Let us pray that we may hearken to God's gracious word, and have hearts ready to obey whither He may bid us follow.

A Spouse of Christ

ST. AGNES

JANUARY 21, 305

"The weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong."—1 COR. i. 27.

WHAT glory must be hers, of whom St. Jerome writes, that the tongues and pens of all nations are employed in her praises! St. Ambrose and St. Augustine have preached on her triumph and Pope St. Damasus wrote verses in her honour, whilst St. Martin of Tours loved her as a special patron. These are the great doctors and defenders of the Church, and she, whom they thus loved and honoured, was a tender maid of thirteen! "The weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong."

To every succeeding generation of believers, St. Agnes, virgin and martyr, has been a model of purity, of fortitude, of a perfect spouse of Jesus Christ—"Quem amavi, quem quœsivi, quem semper optavi" (Whom I have loved, Whom I have sought for, Whom I have always desired). The example of this child-Saint cannot help but arouse true enthusiasm in the hearts even of those who, cowardly, weakly—yet, please God! sincerely—strive to serve that same Saviour, Jesus Christ, for Whom she died so lovingly and so bravely.

Agnes was blessed in having Christian parents, and from her piety and purity we see how carefully she had been taught to love and practise her holy religion. Her beauty and her riches might have ensnared her had it not been for this. Though so young, there were many suitors for her hand, but the chief one was Procopius, the son of the Prefect of Rome. To all she made but the one answer, that she was already espoused to her Lord Jesus Christ. His love scorned, as he thought, the greed of Procopius instigated the fatal accusation against her that she was a Christian.

Brought before the Prefect, interrogated, threatened, Agnes alone was calm and unmoved, whilst the bystanders were in tears of pity for one so young and frail, a victim to the tortures ready for a Christian. She was led to the altar of Minerva, and commanded to offer incense; but neither entreaties, nor threats, nor the sight of the hideous instruments of torture could shake her constancy. Her hand moved, but to make the Sign of the Cross. Her childish wrists were bound in fetters, but the clumsy chains slipped from hands so small and delicate. The judge then ordered her to be removed and detained in one of the cells. And when she entered she found an Angel of the Lord awaiting her, who surrounded her with such a dazzling light, by reason of the glory of which none might touch or look upon her. Leave had been granted for those who wished to come and taunt and insult her. Some of the wicked youths who peered in, hastened away in fear, believing in God. Procopius, however, who had betrayed her as a Christian, came with some companions determined to wreak his vile revenge upon her, when suddenly he was struck blind, or, as some

accounts say, dead, by the Angel! His friends fled in terror, crying out that Agnes was a magician. His father hastened to his stricken son, and at the sight of his grief, Agnes prayed and restored him unharmed; the youth was repentant, and afterwards became a Christian. The Prefect, his father, out of gratitude, wished to release her, but the pagan priests and some of the rabble clamoured for her death, and for fear of the displeasure of the Emperor he withdrew. The deputy-governor thereon ordered a great fire to be enkindled before all the people, and Agnes to be cast into it. The flames swept suddenly to each side, scorching the clamorous crowd, whilst Agnes stood in the centre, praying with outstretched arms, unscathed: "The Lord sent his Angel and delivered me from the midst of the flames, and I was unharmed." To end the outcry at this fresh evidence of witchcraft, as they thought, the executioner was ordered to despatch her with the sword, and with a trembling hand he pierced her throat. Agnes welcomed death, crying out: "O Almighty God, I bless Thee and glorify Thee for ever!"

A church in her honour was built a few years afterwards on this very spot, and stands there to this day, and thus, indeed, she glorifies God for ever. Her parents secured her body and buried it on their estate outside the walls of Rome, where stands the basilica of St. Agnes, still one of the gems and glories of the Holy City. A crowd of Christians, gathered round her grave in prayer, were attacked by a number of pagans, and one of them, Emerentiana, her foster-sister, was stoned to death. At night-time her parents and friends returned and buried this second martyr. The father and mother passed the night by the

grave of Agnes blessing God for her constancy and triumph, and suddenly, in the silence and darkness of the night, a glorious vision appeared, and Agnes, their daughter, surrounded by resplendent virgins, stood before them. The blessed martyr addressed her parents: "Do not grieve for me as dead; but rejoice and be glad because I have gained the mansions of light, as these have done before me, and am united to Him in heaven, Whom, while on earth, I loved with my whole soul."

This comforting and heavenly vision soon became known to all, and strengthened the hearts of the Christians. Some years afterwards Constantia, the daughter of the Emperor Constantine, still a pagan, heard of St. Agnes and this vision. At the time Constantia was suffering from a dreadful malady, and being filled with a holy reverence for the child-martyr, whom she had heard of, she went, full of confidence, to pray at the tomb of St. Agnes. Her prayer was answered. Agnes appeared and spoke to her: "Constantia, act with constancy and courage, and believe in the Lord Jesus, Who will now cure you." Immediately all traces of her sores and ulcers disappeared and she rose from her knees full of faith. After her baptism, out of gratitude, she built the great church over the martyr's tomb, which stands outside the walls of Rome. That was not all. St. Agnes had won her over so completely to her Spouse, Jesus Christ, that Constantia vowed her virginity to God, and gathered round her a holy band of maidens, who received the veil. Her tomb and a church built over it in honour of St. Constantia nestle near by that of St. Agnes.

This was the first-fruit of the prayers of the holy

virgin-martyr. Since then, who shall tell the numbers of the young and innocent who have been led to give themselves to God in holy religion through the prayers and help of St. Agnes, whose example fired their hearts and lifted up their souls to love and seek and long for Jesus Christ, their Heavenly Spouse?

A Hero of the Church

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

JANUARY 27, 407

'Do manfully, and let thy heart take courage."—Ps. xxvi. 14.

WE are all soldiers of Christ. But to quit ourselves valiantly as such, it is necessary that we keep before us a lofty ideal of what we might be, and should be, if, instead of thwarting the grace of God, we acted up to it loyally and manfully. There are countless Saints that present to us, in bold, unmistakable traits, the ideal soldier of Christ.

St. John Chrysostom, hermit, priest at Antioch, and afterwards Archbishop of Constantinople, is such a one. Fearless by nature, irresistible through his eloquence and power to sway his fellow-men, he might have become the first minister in the Empire, or even usurper of the Imperial purple, as were so many rulers in his day. But, fortunately for John, God's grace took hold of him, moulded even that strong character, and made it Christlike. He never feared to wage war on sin, but to sinners he was loving and tender. Each one has his own individuality, but grace, if corresponded to, can ennoble it, spiritualize and transfigure it.

In the first place, St. John's human sympathy with the erring and sinful, by which he so wonderfully

swayed the hearts of the multitude, was the result of his own youthful frailties and his compunction for his sins. He had loved the theatres and voluptuous pleasures of the day; he had tasted the inebriating cup of success when, even as a youth, his pagan masters, wondering at his eloquence, had publicly declared: "What has the Empire lost in such a man, now that the Christians have stolen him from her!" Grace snatched him from these dangers at the critical moment, and years as a monk, and later on a hermit, testify to the ardent contrition and resolve to break with the world—its pleasures, ambitions, and sinfulness.

Those years were years of intense labour and study, as well as prayer. His expositions of the Scriptures, the various treatises he penned, preserved to our own time, justify his title of Doctor of the Church. His humility made him dread the dignity of the priesthood. But he was not to remain hidden. There was work for him in the Church. The Bishop of Antioch ordained him priest in the forty-third year of his age, and commissioned him as his preacher. For twelve years he laboured in that city of a hundred thousand Christians. He confounded the heretics, Jews, and pagans; reformed abuses, and changed the whole state of the populace. He was the honour, the delight, the popular idol, not only of the city, but of all the East, and his reputation was known throughout the Empire. He had saved his city from being plundered and destroyed by his eloquent appeal, by presenting which Bishop Flavian had won over the Emperor Theodosius.

In the year 397, at the death of the Bishop of Constantinople, the eyes of all were turned towards John. By stratagem he was secured and taken to Constantinople, and, in spite of all his remonstrances

consecrated Bishop. The Empire was infested with a number of Arian Bishops, who resented John's elevation and endeavoured to thwart his every work.

Vice and pleasure ruled the city; but they now encountered the intrepid soldier of Christ. He attacked scandal after scandal, whether in the palace or amongst the poor; abuses were abolished, and an incredible number of pagans and Jews converted to the faith. He won his surname, "Chrysostom, the Golden Mouth." Fearless in attacking evil, yet how tender to repentant sinners! Witness his words: "If you are fallen a second time, or even a thousand times into sin, come to me and you shall be healed." "Remember it is a soul, for which all things visible were made, for which laws were given, miracles wrought, mysteries effected; for which God spared not His only Son. Think what a price has been paid for this one soul!"

On the subject of the Holy Eucharist, he uses all his tenderness and force, speaking of the excess of Divine love in the Blessed Sacrament, and exhorting the faithful to its frequent reception. He speaks of the bands of Angels encircling the altar at Mass and Communion; and St. Nilus tells us how St. John owned that he had oftentimes witnessed the heavenly vision.

As the Transfiguration of our Blessed Lord was succeeded by Gethsemane and Calvary, so had St. John's glorious labours to be followed by persecution and the cross. The Empress Eudoxia in reality ruled the Emperor and the Empire. Her character is given by a pagan historian: "Her flagrant avarice, her extortions and injustices knew no bounds. Her court was filled with informers and calumniators, who found means to seize the estates of those who died rich and

to disinherit their children." Added to this, she was vain and licentious. Witness the silver statue of herself that she had erected in front of the cathedral, inaugurated with public games and superstitious rites.

No wonder, then, that such a Saint should displease a court like this in the fearless discharge of his duties. The Empress was quick to take offence, and her hatred and desire of revenge were implacable. The Arians joining forces with the court, Arcadius, the Emperor, at length ordered John to withdraw from the city. He refused to forsake the church committed to him by God unless compelled by force. The Emperor sent troops to drive the people, who had gathered round their Bishop, out of the church on Holy Saturday, and the sacred place was polluted with blood and disgraceful outrages. The timid ruler withdrew his hand for a time for fear of the populace, but two months afterwards he signed the decree of banishment against St. John.

To prevent further bloodshed, the Saint privately gave himself up to be taken into exile. God's vengeance fell upon the city. A great fire broke out, and destroyed the noble church and the senate house. A dreadful hailstorm made havoc in the city, and the Empress died a few days afterwards. The hermit, St. Nilus, wrote to the Emperor: "How do you hope to see Constantinople delivered from the destroying Angel of the Lord after such enormities, after banishing the blessed John, the pillar of the Church, the lamp of truth, the trumpet of Christ?"

The undaunted soldier of Christ bore the cruelties of his exile gladly for the sake of His Master. His enemies meant him to die, but dare not, seemingly, put him to death. The soldiers with him were in-

structed so to wear him out in every way that the frail old man should soon sink under his afflictions. "He suffered incredible hardships from heat, fatigue, a fever, and pains in his chest, and the severity of the guards. He was forced to travel almost all night, deprived of the necessaries of life; refreshed, indeed, if he could get a little water to drink or bread to eat!" And this continued for a seventy days' journey. When his place of exile was known, many came to visit him, and such reverence and honour paid to him that again he was forced away, and taken to the most distant spot in the Empire, on the shores of the Black Sea. The officers in charge were ordered to hurry him in a limited number of days, with a promise of promotion if by hard usage he should die on the way.

His last resting-place on the journey was the oratory dedicated to St. Basiliscus the Martyr. To blessed John the Martyr appeared that night, and said: "Be of good courage, brother John, for to-morrow we shall be together." Asking his guards to let him stay there, they hurried him cruelly away, but finding in a little while that he was dying, they had him brought back. He was yet fasting, and after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, poured forth his last prayer, courageous to the end, and finished with his usual and favourite ejaculation, "Glory be to God for all things!" and, signing himself with the sign of the Cross, he sweetly breathed forth his soul to God.

Think not that this hero's life was a failure! He was the soldier of Him Whose battlefield was Calvary, Whose victory was won on the Cross! John's golden words and brave example would live for ages in Christ's Church; and his unseen life—the life of eternal glory—dawned upon him then.

The Real Presence

SS. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM AND ALEXANDRIA

March 18, 386, and January 28, 412

"And the bread that I will give, is My Flesh, for the life of the world."—John vi. 52.

We live surrounded by those who have been brought up to regard the Holy Mass with suspicion and contempt, and to consider the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist as some Popish innovation foisted on the simple minds of believers in the Dark Ages.

This is a calamity for them and a danger to Catholics, for, unless we are on our guard, our veneration, love, and loyalty to the most Holy Eucharist may be contaminated by such an atmosphere of irreverence and disbelief. And many such non-Catholics and their ministers and Bishops ignorantly maintain that they have the true doctrine, and claim descent and parentage from the ancient Church of Christ. To strengthen our own faith, and revive the veneration and devotion which should inflame our hearts towards the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, let us examine how they grievously err in disbelieving the Real Presence.

The doctrine of this Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was believed and held

from the beginning of the Church; was not invented by a Pope, but taught by Christ our Lord Himself; was not believed simply at Rome; but was universal throughout the Church from the earliest times.

To single out proofs, let us seek them at the two great centres of religion in the East during the fourth century. Jerusalem was the cradle of Christianity, and Alexandria, the second largest city of the world of those days, had been the great seat of learning from the time of Origen. And two great Saints—namesakes and partial contemporaries—Cyril, patriarch of Jerusalem, and Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, explain the doctrine of Transubstantiation—of the Real Presence—in such plain terms that no one can doubt that it was the faith of the Church in the fourth age.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem is no myth. He stood forth prominent in history as the Bishop of Jerusalem when the Emperor Julian, the Apostate, endeavoured to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. St. Cyril, unmoved by the frenzied eagerness of the Jews to rebuild the Temple, relied on the Scripture prophecies, and foretold that all their work would come to naught. Accounts of eyewitnesses tell us of earthquakes, tempests, fiery eruptions that destroyed the very foundations over and over again, maiming, burning, and killing hundreds of the workers. Julian destined St. Cyril for martyrdom, but the tyrant's own death saved the Bishop.

Now this is the Saint who bears such unmistakable testimony about the Real Presence. He writes (XXII. Catechesis): "Do not look upon the bread and wine as bare and common elements, for they are the Body and Blood of Christ, as our Lord assures us. Although thy sense suggest this to thee, let

faith make thee firm and sure. Judge not of the thing by the taste, but be certain from faith that thou hast been honoured with the gift of Christ's Body and Blood. When He has pronounced and said of the bread, 'This is My Body,' who will after this dare to doubt? and when He has assured and said, 'This is My Blood,' who can ever hesitate, saying it is not His Blood? He changed water into wine at Cana, and shall we not think Him worthy our belief when He has changed wine into Blood? Wherefore let us receive them with an entire belief as Christ's Body and Blood, that when thou hast received Christ's Body and Blood thou be made one body and blood with Him."

And in his final instruction he calls the Mass an unbloody sacrifice, a victim of propitiation, a supreme worship. He mentions the commemoration of the living and the dead, and says: "We also pray for the deceased holy fathers, Bishops, and all in general who are dead, believing this will be a great succour to those souls for which prayer is offered whilst the holy and most tremendous Victim lies present. . . . We offer Christ sacrificed for our sins, striving to appease and make our merciful God propitious both to them and to ourselves."

The second Cyril, to whom we turn for proof, was consecrated Bishop of Alexandria about twenty-five years after the death of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. He, too, stands out so prominent a figure in those far-off days that he is known as well as a character of modern times. The protagonist of the heresiarch Nestorius, the champion of the Incarnation and of Mary the Mother of God, he was chosen by Pope Celestine to preside over the two hundred Bishops assembled at

the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431, where Nestorius was condemned and deposed. Later the heretics caused St. Cyril to be unjustly condemned by the Emperor; but the Saint thanked God for all his sufferings and professed himself ready to shed his blood for the Gospel.

The extraordinary devotion of this great Bishop towards the Holy Eucharist is evident from the zeal with which he frequently inculcated the glorious effects which it produces in the soul of him who receives it worthily—in healing all his spiritual disorders, strengthening him against temptation, subduing his passions, giving life, and making him one with Christ, not only in spirit, but also with His sacred Humanity. He says in Holy Communion we are made concorporeal with Christ. He maintains the reality of Christ's Body in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. He says: "The holy Body of Christ gives life to us when received, and preserves us in it, being the very Body of life itself . . . by Whom all things receive life and are preserved in it. Christ, by His Flesh, hides in us life and the seed of immortality, heals our diseases, assuaging the law of the flesh raging in our members." Again, further on in this treatise, on St. John, he extols the institution of this great Sacrament, the most exalted of all God's mysteries. He speaks of the wonderful manner in which we are united and made one with Him, which he calls "an incorporation, a blending together; for as wax melted and mingled with another piece of melted wax makes one, so by partaking of His precious Body and Blood He is united in us, and we in Him. . . . We are sanctified, being made partakers of the sacred Flesh and the precious Blood of Christ, the Saviour of us all. . . . We

perform in the churches the holy and life-giving Sacrifice, believing the Body which is placed and the precious Blood to be made the very Body and Blood of the Word, which gives life to all things."

Could words more manifestly prove that the doctrine that Catholics hold now on the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is exactly the same as was held and venerated fifteen hundred years ago? Could not any Bishop or Pope now write the very words of these two Cyrils of Jerusalem and Alexandria? Where is there a single point of difference in the holy doctrine? Is not the yearning for Holy Communion, the fervour inculcated, the welcome to our King and Lord the same as we have been taught ourselves?

These two great Saints are only specimens of many others—Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ambrose, and the rest who have taught exactly the same doctrine, offered the same Mass, revered the same Real and Divine Presence as the Catholic Church does to-day. It is the same Blessed Sacrament. May our hearts be as eager, our faith as keen, our longing to receive it as inflamed as theirs!

Meekness

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

JANUARY 29, 1622

"Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."—MATT. xi. 29.

OUR Blessed Lord is the infinitely perfect Exemplar, on which His Saints have modelled their lives. And there is one virtue that He bids us all learn of Himself. It is necessary, therefore, for us to endeavour to do so, otherwise we shall imperil our salvation. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

Self-love invents many excuses to prevent us trying. It says: Meekness will not do in this world; we should only be put upon and victimized. It is very well for some natures, but I have a quick and hasty temper; it would be impossible. We should have no influence with others, and the world would take us for fools. These are all vain and futile excuses. If we trust to ourselves we shall surely fail. Self-sufficiency is a weak and treacherous support.

On the other hand, remember how God blesses the meek. "The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace" (Ps. xxxvi. 11). "He shall exalt the meek unto salvation" (Ps. cxlix. 4). "And the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord"

(Isa. xxix. 19). And St. Peter says: "A quiet and meek spirit which is rich in the sight of God" (1 Pet. iii. 4). And our Blessed Lord Himself says: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Matt. v. 3). Well, therefore, may He bid us learn to be meek.

One of His Saints gives us a beautiful example in regard of this. St. Francis of Sales was naturally of a hasty and passionate temper, as he himself assures us. He was full of fire and impetuosity, and, fearing where such a spirit might lead him, from his early youth he resolved to learn from our Blessed Lord, and to make meekness his favourite virtue. So earnestly did he set himself to learn and practise this lesson, imitating his loving Master, that he in time changed his predominant passion into his characteristic virtue. But this was not accomplished without long and earnest prayer and a constant watchfulness and repression of himself. For three years he laboured at this one object. The rule of life that he set himself was: Continual attention to the presence of God; to offer up every action to Him; to implore God's help on every undertaking. God was all in all to him, nothing else mattered; unruffled by whatever happened, he kept his soul in meekness.

The Almighty tried him severely at the outset, and it is a lesson and encouragement to us to recall it to mind. Suddenly all God's favours ceased, and spiritual dryness and sadness took possession of his heart. He was almost brought to the brink of despair. Weary days and sleepless nights he passed in tears and misery, and his distress of mind brought on a serious illness. He persevered at his prayers, though in the darkness of his soul he could not see how to please God or secure

his salvation. One day, praying as usual in the church, he cast his eyes on a picture of our Lady. Confidence in that blessed Mother suddenly awakened in his heart, and with all earnestness he pleaded with her to let him see how to love God with his whole mind and heart and strength. At length there came to his lips, no doubt from a long and tender habit, the prayer of St. Bernard, "Remember, O most holy Virgin Mary." That moment relief overflowed his soul! His former peace and tranquillity returned, and never failed him through the labours and struggles of his life. "The meek shall delight in abundance of peace."

St. Francis being the eldest son of a noble house, his father had very different designs for him than to allow him to become a priest. The dutiful son, unwilling to give pain and still more to disobey, had recourse to God, and piety and meekness overcame all obstacles. The Bishop of Geneva, after his ordination, entrusted to him the difficult and dangerous mission of converting the Calvinists, who were not only most numerous, but also the terror of the neighbouring country. Amongst all his priests, Francis had been the only one willing to attempt the work. His father and friends were dismayed, but their fear and entreaties did not daunt his courage. More than ever now he trusted to meekness. Denunciation was useless, violence of no avail against these heretics—"but the meek shall inherit the land." The Calvinists at first shunned him, hated him, and actually attempted his life. The two hired assassins were the first he won over by meekly forgiving them and pleading that they might be acquitted. For four years he laboured at Thonon, on Lake Geneva, with scarcely any visible success. Then his sweetness and persevering meekness were

rewarded. As Cardinal Perron said, "I can refute the Calvinists, but it takes Francis of Sales to persuade and convert them." More missioners had to be sent to help him; churches were established in every parish. A plague broke out, and the self-forgetting charity of Francis shone out with a glorious lustre that made multitudes distinguish between the good shepherd and their own Calvinistic hirelings. Their preachers often insulted him, calumniated him, endeavoured to thwart him in every way; but his kindly meekness was never ruffled, his patience never exhausted. In these Apostolic labours he converted seventy-two thousand heretics. Truly "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land."

Succeeding to the bishopric of Geneva, his fame spread, and his labours became more extended. Year after year he was besought to preach the Lents in different cities of France, and even at the Court in Paris. King Henry the Fourth tried his utmost to keep him always there, and wished to have him made Cardinal. The Saint objected to honours as much as to money, which he always refused except for the poor. His episcopate of twenty-two years was, as it were, one long mission; and the marvellous thing is how he found time to write his numerous learned and devotional works. The founding of the Order of the Visitation Nuns was a labour of love, to which he devoted much time and devotedness. His love of Christ urged him to these most assiduous labours; and even when ailing he would preach even twice a day, and when remonstrated with, the answer of that meek and loving soul was, as he pointed to the crucifix: "How can we deny anything to a God Who reduced Himself to this for the love of us?"

And when he died, worn out with imitating Christ his Master, he prayed: " O My God, my desire is before Thee and my sighs are not hidden from Thee. My God and my all !" Can we not all find a friend in the kindly St. Francis ? Let us pray for his help to become peaceful, forgiving, meek and humble. He cannot refuse us. We can quote his own words to him, which he often repeated about poor sinners: " Has not our Blessed Lord given them His Blood, and shall I refuse them my tears ? If Saul the persecutor had been cast off we should never have had a St. Paul !"

A Mother's Prayers

ST. ANDREW CORSINI

FEBRUARY 4, 1373

"For the sorrow according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation."—2 COR. vii. 10.

A MOTHER'S prayers are like angels guarding us through life. Yet, for the most part, a mother's love, solicitude, and anxiety are regarded only as what should be expected—is she not our mother? And her chidings and her tears soon become irksome, her interference is resented, and youth thinks itself wise enough and clever enough to go its own way and manage its own affairs.

How many souls have been ruined through this ignorant conceit! They ridiculed the saying of the wise man: "He that hath himself for a master has a fool for his scholar." Whereas these souls would have been saved had they possessed the humility to listen to and obey their mother, to suffer themselves to be checked and ruled by her, to be warned before evil overtook them. Even those who have happily kept to the right path, obedient to the Church, faithful in approaching the Sacraments, if they would persevere let them humbly ascribe their innocence and piety, not to themselves, but to the grace of God, granted

to them so abundantly in answer to their mother's prayers.

And that is not all. Should there not be a tender and constant gratitude for all their mother's care and a remembrance of the long hours of anxiety and tears, as she watched any approach of danger to body or soul? We take all a mother has to give as callously as the prodigal son received his portion from his father, and we cannot be free from her influence too soon. And we count ourselves good children if, at her death, we offer her " a tardy payment of tears."

Let St. Andrew Corsini teach us and make us realize what we owe to a mother's solicitude and prayers. He was offered to God before he was born, and in a special manner dedicated to our Blessed Lady. Of a rich and eminent family in Florence, every care was taken that he should be well instructed and most piously brought up. But, alas ! as soon as he became a youth, and money and liberty allowed him according to his station, he became the associate of fast and unprincipled young men, and gave himself up to vice and extravagance. At home his grief-stricken mother never ceased her tears and her prayers. Her complaints and reproaches were only responded to by insolence. But the prayers went on. And as dripping water can wear away a stone, so those mother's prayers at length made an impression on the hardness of his heart. One day, after some more wicked outbreak than usual, the bitterness of her grief forced her to rebuke him sharply, and complain of the sorrow and shame that he was causing her. " But what is that," she said, " to the enormity of your sinfulness against God. You were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin at your birth; you belong to her; and see what you are !

You are the wolf I dreamed of before you were born, that ravaged the city. Fulfil my dream now, for the wolf ran into the Carmelite Church and was turned into a lamb!" Her long years of prayers now won their victory. His heart was pierced with remorse, and was penetrated with the fear of God, as he realized what he should have been and what his sinfulness had made him become. Forthwith he sought the church of the Carmelite Fathers, and there, before the altar of our Lady, where his mother had dedicated him as an infant, he prayed long and sorrowfully and fervently. "The sorrow according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation."

He returned no more to his parents' house, but humbly sought admission to the monastery with such earnestness and persistence that he was admitted as a postulant. He had much to suffer from his former friends, relatives, and even an uncle, who tried in every way to seduce him from the penitential life he had embraced. His mother's prayers had won for him a true and abiding sorrow for his sins; he never forgot to whom he owed that signal grace of conversion. Let us admire and reverence the power of God's grace that had changed this wayward youth into the model of the monastery—the most humble, obedient, and devout of all the brethren, the true penitent, who trusts in God's forgiveness, but never forgives himself.

Years afterwards we recognize him as the great preacher in Florence bringing crowds to repentance, the peacemaker, the miracle worker! His own cousin, a notorious gambler and evil liver, dying of a dreadful cancer in his throat, was cured, both body and soul, by the prayer of St. Andrew. But he himself, interiorly, was always the same humble penitent, repeating con-

tinually the words of St. Augustine: "Too late have I loved Thee. . . . Thou wert always with me, but I was not with Thee."

On the death of the Bishop of the neighbouring city of Fiesole, Andrew's name was on every lip; but he instantly took to flight and concealed himself. He was miraculously discovered, and, fearing to disobey the will of God, in sorrow allowed himself to be consecrated Bishop. His labours, his austerities, his piety were redoubled. He, the poor sinner in his youth, to become a Bishop, the crowning work of his mother's prayers! Every Thursday, in memory of our Blessed Lord's washing the feet of His disciples, Andrew, to preserve his humility, washed the feet of twelve poor men. On one occasion a poor man refused to allow the Bishop so to demean himself, and owned that his feet were loathsome with running sores and ulcers. Andrew lovingly insisted, and as he kissed them the feet were instantly cured, to the admiration of those around.

Whilst singing Mass on Christmas night our Lady appeared to him and told him of his approaching death. He lingered till the Epiphany, when, happily and joyfully, he gave up his soul to God. The voice of the people proclaimed him a Saint; numerous miracles testified to his holiness; and his relics were allowed to be reverenced long before he was canonized.

Mothers, who are anxious for their children's souls, take courage from the prayers of the mother of St. Andrew. And the young, perhaps tempted as he was, perhaps already treading the dangerous path which he trod, beg of him to touch your hearts and win you over to God.

Converting Others

ST. DOROTHY

FEBRUARY 6, 305

"He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death."—JAS. v. 20.

CONSTANCY in the love and service of God is a virtue which everyone needs day after day in the warfare of life. If through our own fault or negligence we fall amongst temptations or get entangled in the occasions of sin, no wonder our constancy melts away and that we are overcome by sin. But if trials and temptations beset us that we cannot evade or escape from, that we have necessarily to encounter, then grace is always given us by God, if we pray for it, to enable us to be constant and faithful. No one knows what they may achieve till the occasion arises. Trust in God, and holy prayer will then bear us on to success.

And when we find the young, the timid, striving courageously for the love of Christ, our hearts must be dead if they do not respond to such noble examples with whole-hearted zeal and determination that we, too, will do our best and bravest when called upon by God. Who, indeed, knows the day or the hour when the occasion may occur and the summons call for us to play our part as obedient and constant soldiers of

Jesus Christ? Can we not do what others have done for love of Him?

Take, for example, to illustrate this, St. Dorothy, the Virgin Martyr of Cæsarea in Cappadocia. She was brought before Fabricius the Governor on two charges: she would not marry, and she would not sacrifice to idols. She would not adore false gods, because she was a Christian and worshipped only the one true God. She would not marry, because she had vowed her virginity to God, and her Spouse was Jesus Christ. Quickly the judge had recourse to tortures, and in various and inhuman ways he sought to overcome her constancy. Then, seeing her weak with pain and loss of blood, he hoped she would the more easily give way, and he ordered her to be given over to two unfortunate sisters, Christina and Callista, who had recently abjured their faith and lost their virtue to save themselves from the scourge and the rack. The want of constancy had ruined them. Dorothy, then, was entrusted to them to be perverted. Fearing to incur the anger of Fabricius if they failed, they tried in every way to persuade her to deny the faith. Arguments, promises, threats, wickedness, cruelties were all powerless. Dorothy's prayers and trust in God made her invincible. Not content with praying for herself, she earnestly petitioned God's mercy for these two misguided sisters. She grieved to think that souls for which Christ had shed His precious Blood should thus be traitors to Him. She prayed, she appealed to them, and at length moved them to remorse and shame, and when they were tempted to despair of God's forgiveness for their iniquities, she cried to them: "It is worse to despair of God's mercy than to sacrifice to idols." The contest was won; they

knelt together in prayer, imploring that mercy which is never denied to the contrite heart, that strength which never faileth those who trust in it.

When Dorothy was summoned to the tribunal again, and the sisters were asked how they had succeeded, Fabricius was amazed to hear them cry out that they repented of their cowardice and were willing to die for Christ, Whom they bravely confessed as the only true and living God. At once in his wrath he condemned them to death. Chained together, and crying out, "O Lord, receive our penance and grant us pardon!" they were cast into a huge fire and consumed in the presence of Dorothy, who stood there calling upon God to give them fortitude to the end.

Then it was her own turn to endure the tortures once again. She was beaten on the face, burnt with hot irons, and suffered other grievous pains. But all through her tortures she was exultant and joyful. Had she not won those fallen sisters back to their faith? Were they not already in heaven praying for her, who, instead of being perverted by them, had rescued and saved their souls? Well might Dorothy be brave! "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death."

The crowd around, and even the judge, marvelled how it was that she triumphed over all that his cruelty could invent. She spoke to him of her Heavenly Spouse, the joy it was that He had accepted the consecration of her soul to Him, and how eternal joy awaited her if she was faithful to the end. Fearing that more of this might win others to become Christians, Fabricius abruptly ordered her to be taken forthwith and be beheaded.

There was one standing by, Theophilus, a lawyer, who had wondered to witness the constancy of so young a maiden, and at her speaking of her Spouse, and at the look in those eyes of hers as if she saw the glory of heaven awaiting her. Poor pagan that he was, how could he understand her—a girl about to die, yet speaking of her Spouse, this transport of hope and joy and a cruel death awaiting her! As she passed him near by on the way to execution, he called to her, hardly knowing why: "Dorothy, give me a bridal favour; send me fruits and flowers from your marriage festival." She turned, and bent those eyes full of heavenly radiance upon him, and sweetly said, "I will remember," and passed on to her doom praying for him, for was not this another soul that she might save? How could God refuse her request when she was laying down her life for love of Him?

That look and voice haunted Theophilus; the martyr was ever in his thoughts. The next day, as he was relating the incident to some friends, a beautiful child appeared at the door of his house, and, delivering a basket, left the message, "Dorothy has remembered," and was gone. There in the basket lay roses and fruits, fresh and beautiful, and this in the depth of winter, early February, in a bleak and wintry country, where there was no such thing then as a rose for hundreds of miles around. Yes, they were real, they were lovely, and of a truth they must have come from Dorothy.

Indeed, and there was more than that! They had brought grace with them, and the eyes of that poor pagan soul were opened, and he believed in the God and the Divine Spouse of the virgin Dorothy. In a transport of joy and zeal, taking the basket with him,

he immediately sought out the Governor; he showed him the flowers and fruits, he explained what had happened, and fearlessly cried out, "Christ is God!" He would not be silenced, but in his untutored way became an Apostle. He was seized, and scourged and beheaded on the very spot where Dorothy had died praying for him.

Let us call upon St. Dorothy to help us on our way through life. If once she answers "I will remember," we shall have secured a faithful friend. Our prayers should be that we may be as brave and constant as she was. May it not be that we, too, may have the opportunity to convert some soul to God? We may not even know, but how glorious for us hereafter if our good example has brought light and grace to some poor soul in the darkness of error or sinfulness! St. Dorothy did not venture amongst the fallen of her own accord, or she might not have had the grace to convert them or persevere herself; but, when the occasion was thrust upon her, wickedness could not harm her, for her prayer rendered her safe and constant, and made her example shine out so nobly that she won her very tempters back to Christ.

The Reward of Repentance

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA

FEBRUARY 22, 1295

"If the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he hath committed . . . living he shall live, and shall not die."—EZECH. xviii. 21.

TRUE repentance is the one hope and chance of salvation for all that have sinned. But there are so many who are unwilling to class themselves as sinners. There are many grievous sins which, perhaps, they have never committed; they may never have fallen so as to have given scandal; they have confessed their sins—those sins which over-indulgent self-love even could not hide from their conscience; but are they as guiltless in the sight of God as they would fain believe? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John i. 8).

Then, again, comes the awkward question, What penance have they done for sin? Surely no one, looking at the crucifix and contemplating the punishment endured there for sin, will dare to say that the sacramental penance—a litany, a decade of the rosary—are as much as they are called upon to do in order to expiate the faults and negligences, the infidelities to grace and omissions of the past?

The Saints teach us a very different lesson; and in

proportion to the penance they performed they have been raised to the life of grace in this world, and to the life of glory hereafter.

St. Margaret of Cortona, the penitent, exemplifies this in such a marked manner as to fill the greatest sinner with hope and to encourage the lukewarm to strenuous endeavour. For some years she led a gay, wild, and dissolute life. Yet the poor girl had some excuse to plead: she had early in life lost her mother, and that says so much—no one to confide in, no one to check her, no one to win her over. Her father, a weak and easily-led man, had no interest in her; and she had a stepmother, whose cruelty and vindictiveness aroused the evil in her young heart, and made her disobedient, reckless, and rebellious. Ah, how easy was the downward path to forbidden pleasure and to vice!

Perhaps it was her dead mother's prayers that won for her the profound and efficacious repentance that saved her soul. Walking one day in the woods, she was attracted by the agitation and whinings of her dog to quit the path, and there, half concealed amongst the bushes, lay the corpse of a murdered man. At a glance she recognized in that loathsome, putrid mass the gay gallant, the last of her lovers, whose absence or desertion of her she had been bemoaning. For her sake there had been a duel or a secret murder; for her sake he had thus been hurried before his Judge with all his sins—their sins—upon his soul!

Horror and remorse for her past, for the guiltiness of her life, affrighted her, and God's most loving grace touched her heart. It was as if the Prophet had cried out to her: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn

from his way and live" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). With a humble and contrite heart Margaret did turn from her evil ways. She returned home, and on her knees begged pardon from her father and stepmother for the evil life she had led and the scandal she had given. Her father forgave her, and received her kindly, but her repentance seemed to irritate her stepmother more than her sinful life had done. By degrees the father gave in to the woman's wicked tongue, and home was no home for Margaret any more; she was scorned and turned adrift. And the poor penitent went forth with nothing but her bad name and evil past belonging to her. Oh, the misery, the conflict, the anguish, trying to be repentant and good, and to be treated as a hypocrite, vilified, and cast out a homeless wanderer!

She went from convent to convent, but no one was willing to receive such a one as poor Margaret. At length she reached Cortona, and there found a home for penitents at the convent of the Franciscan Sisters. For three years they tried her, at first with fear and misgivings, but her humility, prayerfulness, fastings, and austerities overcame all doubts and opposition, and she was admitted as a Sister. The evil spirit waged a long and relentless war against her, but the true penitent won the victory; for daily her sorrow for her sins grew stronger, and her gratitude for the Heavenly Father's mercy, and her longing to live only for the love of Jesus, her Redeemer.

The whole convent were made spectators of the wonderful effects of true repentance! They realized that the mercy of the Lord is above all His works. They saw her, whom they had feared to receive, now so favoured by God on account of her holy, penitential life, that she could cast out evil spirits from others,

that she was ravished into frequent ecstasies—in one word, her very presence filled the Sisters with the ardour of Divine love.

We learn from St. Margaret's writings what were the chief means of her holiness, her special devotions. The first and greatest was devotion to the Passion of our Blessed Lord. Those sufferings which had been endured for her sins! The treatise she wrote on the Passion of Christ ranks high amongst the writings of the Saints. This devotion urged her to daily Confession and Communion, her second devotion.

Her third great devotion was to the souls in Purgatory. Being a penniless nun, enclosed from the world, what could she do in the way of charity? The souls in Purgatory found in her a benefactress indeed. They were in prison, and she visited them; they were sick, and she comforted them; they were hungry, and she fed them with the consolations of her Holy Communions. Unweariedly for the thirty years of her penitential life these were her three special devotions.

When her blessed end was approaching, and the poor, worn-out body—that once had sinned, but had expiated them with long years of penance—was longing for its release, God blessed her death with marvels of consolation. The Sisters around the dying Saint all witnessed a glorious vision—a crowd of heavenly spirits, who cried out to Margaret: "We are the souls you freed from Purgatory by your prayers and penances and Holy Communions. We come now to bear you to the welcome of your Lord." What a contrast! the poor penitent kneeling at the convent gate seeking admission thirty years ago, and now the glorious soul of that same penitent escorted to heaven by the grateful blessed ones whom she had befriended!

St. Margaret's funeral was a triumph. Pope Leo X., being in the neighbourhood at the time, ordered a Mass of Thanksgiving instead of a Requiem. Such miracles took place—several dead being raised to life, that unless they had been well attested belief in them could not be expected. For hundreds of years her body remained incorrupt, and conversions and miracles at her tomb told of her power with God and her compassion for sinners in their need.

Let us pray for St. Margaret's help to make generous response to God's grace, to break thoroughly with all sinfulness, and to keep our heart attuned to holy penitence by devotion to the Passion, frequent Confession and Communion, and a tender devotion to the holy souls.

Love of the Blessed Sacrament

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

March 7, 1274

"Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."—John xxi. 15.

If there is one devotion that we should all endeavour to cultivate in our souls it is devotion to the most Holy Eucharist: the centre of worship, the culmination of God's love for man, "the greatest miracle that Christ wrought." And besides the general teaching of the Church, is it not most helpful to have someone, whom we can trust, to lead us by his own example to the loving practice of this devotion? Surely the Angelic Doctor is one whom we can most confidently trust. In him were combined the deepest knowledge of this mystery of God's love and the practice of the most tender devotion to it.

Passing by the heroic manner in which he overcame the almost insuperable obstacles to the following of his religious vocation, his genius and application to his sacred studies, his being made professor of philosophy at the age of twenty-two, and of theology ten years before the canonical age; mark how he put aside all duties when he came to prepare for his ordination to the priesthood. He redoubled his watchings, prayers, and other spiritual exercises. His devotion to the

Blessed Sacrament was the marvel of his brethren. He passed several hours of the day and part of the night before the altar, entranced in the contemplation of the infinite love of the God made man, Whom there he worshipped. When at length ordained, and he himself was privileged to offer the Holy Sacrifice, tears and raptures, which he could not restrain, bespoke the ardour of his soul.

His sanctity, his eloquence in preaching, his learning as Doctor of Theology, rendered him the most eminent man at quite an early age. The University of Paris, being divided on some learned theological point concerning the Blessed Sacrament, asked Thomas to write a treatise and explain the matter. After prayer before the tabernacle, he complied, and when finished he laid his answer upon the altar, and thus prayed to our Blessed Lord: "If I have written truth, enable me to teach it; if error, hinder me from declaring it." His brethren testified that they saw our Blessed Lord appear, and heard Him say: "Thomas, thou hast written well of the Sacrament of My Body."

Shortly after this Pope Urban IV. called St. Thomas to Rome, kept him near him, and would have him lecture wherever he went. It was then that an opportunity occurred for which St. Thomas had prayed. On his presenting his book, "Catena Aurea," to the Holy Father, as a mark of esteem, the Pope wished to raise him to the episcopate. But Thomas wished to be a simple friar and not a Bishop, and excused himself, but added that he had a favour to ask instead. And this that he was longing for was that the Festival of the Blessed Sacrament, "Corpus Christi," which was then only observed in Germany, should be made universal throughout the Church. Joyfully the Pope acceded to his request, and, further, enjoined him to compose

the Office and the Mass for the Festival. Truly God had given him the desire of his heart! That work was one long rapture of joy to Thomas. His learning and his love had full scope in this holy task. How he weaves, as if inspired, in the responsories of the Office texts from the Old Scripture—types of the Blessed Sacrament—with words of Christ Himself in the New. And take those glorious hymns, which have resounded throughout the Church for centuries. Who can join in them without enthusiasm? The "Pange Lingua," "Verbum Supernum," "Lauda Sion!" How many souls have they fired with Divine ardour! How many cold hearts have they won back to God! Never a Benediction is given without those final verses, "O Salutaris Hostia" and "Tantum ergo Sacramentum," being sung by the faithful. What a glorious offering did Thomas make to His Lord, to the poor Prisoner of love, to the silent One waiting in the Tabernacle! How God blesses a good deed! And that blessing can make it spread throughout the world, can bestow upon it an imperishable vitality.

When he had completed, a few years later, his great theological work, The Standard Authority of the Church, our Blessed Lord again appeared to him as he was praying, and said: "Thou hast written well of Me, Thomas, what recompense dost thou desire?" He answered: "No other than Thyself, O Lord." In the Blessed Sacrament he had Jesus Christ Himself; what reward, other than that, could count for aught?

But this blessed life of his was, as men might think, to be all too short. Summoned to attend the General Council at Lyons to defend the faith against the Eastern schismatics, St. Thomas obediently set out, although he was weak and ill. His fever increasing he was compelled to break his journey at the Cistercian

Abbey of Fossa Nuova. Entering the monastery, he went first to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. There pouring forth his soul in earnest prayer, it was intimated to him that there he should die, as he told the monks on leaving the church.

Humbly and patiently he prepared for the end, a source of edification to all around. He made a general confession, and humbly owned that it was God's pure mercy that had preserved him from every sin that he had not committed. When the Holy Viaticum was brought to him, he raised himself and knelt, and said aloud, as the tears streamed down his face: "I firmly believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present in this most Holy Sacrament. I receive Thee, the price of my soul's ransom, I receive Thee, the Viaticum of my soul's pilgrimage, for Whose love I have studied, watched and laboured, preached and taught." The moment before receiving, he exclaimed his favourite ejaculation, which he was accustomed to say at the Elevation: "Thou, O Christ, art the King of Glory, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

He, who loved the Blessed Sacrament so much in life, who was so earnest to see devotion to It increase, will not be deaf to our prayers, if we piously beg of him to teach us and help us to be loyal and loving to our Blessed Lord in the Holy Eucharist. That Divine Master is all in all to us! Of Whom St. Thomas wrote so tersely, yet so graphically:

> "Se nascens dedit socium,
> Convescens in edulium,
> Se moriens in pretium,
> Se regnans dat in præmium."

"At His Birth He became our companion; at the Last Supper our very food; dying, He was our ransom; in glory our reward."

Devotion to the Guardian Angels

ST. FRANCES OF ROME

MARCH 9, 1440

"His angel hath been my keeper."—JUDITH xiii. 20.

THE Holy Scriptures give clear and abundant proof that both our souls and bodies are under the protection and guardianship of Angels. The very mention of Lot, Tobias, Judith, bring instances to our remembrance. And David tells us: "He hath given His Angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up; lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xc. 11, 12). And this is the very verse that the devil quoted to our Blessed Saviour when he tempted Him.

In the early days of the Church we find Angels fulfilling their sacred ministry; for instance, at the liberation of St. Peter from prison. And St. Cecilia and St. Agnes were guarded visibly by Angels, as the acts of their martyrdom tell us.

Almighty God could guard us Himself, but He uses the ministry of Angels for a benign and heavenly reason. For if we believe in and remember their companionship, our souls are lifted up from this world. We realize that we are created for something far better and more lasting than the empty joys and pleasures.

ambitions and successes of this fleeting life. The presence of our Angel strengthens us in trials and adversities, comforts us in suffering, and nerves us always to dare and persevere in doing right. And the faith that an Angel is by our side fills us with the blessed hope that the day will come when we shall see him and rejoice with him in the company of the blessed before the face of God.

Some may be cold-hearted towards the Angels, because they do not understand why these blessed spirits should be interested in us, or love us so that they should with patience and sympathy guide our wandering steps to heaven. The Angels are anxious to save us: first, because their fallen brethren endeavour to ruin us; again, because they long to fill the places that Lucifer and his followers lost by their disobedience; and, lastly, because they cannot help loving us for whom their Lord and our Lord shed His precious Blood to save.

One of the most popular Saints in Rome for the last four hundred and fifty years and more is St. Frances, who is an example above all others for her reverence and obedience to her Angel Guardian, and for the heavenly favours and assistance received from him. He was her strength and consolation, and for more than twenty-four years she enjoyed the singular privilege of beholding him at her side.

Her life was chequered with many trials and vicissitudes, but her obedience to the Holy Will of God, especially by obeying her confessor, won for her miracles of defence and consolation. Soon after the death of her first little boy at the age of eight, whom she had so resignedly offered to Almighty God to join the Angels in heaven, she merited the special favour of her

lifetime. About a year after his death, Evangelista, her little son, appeared to her beaming with celestial glory. He told her his home was heaven, his companions were the Angels. By his side was another of the same age and height, but still more beautiful. "God has given," said her child, "this my Angel companion to be the guardian of your earthly pilgrimage. Day and night at your side he will protect you and help you in every way. But be prepared to offer another sacrifice to God. The place for my sister Agnes is prepared in heaven, and she will soon be called away." The vision of her child vanished; but the Angel remained, and from that day forward was ever present to her sight. Others saw him not; but Frances rejoiced in that glorious vision, which kindled in her heart the most ardent devotion. How she despised this world, and longed each day and hour to fit herself for heaven!

Thus strengthened she faced the trials of her life: saw her husband wounded in defence of the Pope, imprisoned, and his palace dismantled. The tyrant who had taken Rome demanded her son, Giovan Battista, as a hostage. St. Frances fled with him, trying to find a place of concealment, when suddenly she met her confessor, who said to her: "It is your duty to give up your son, and you go and pray in the church." Though this seemed as if consigning her boy to imprisonment or even death, she obediently returned. Friends besought her not to proceed, but resolutely she gave up her son to Count Troja, and then hurried, a broken-hearted woman, into the neighbouring church of Ara Cœli. The boy was ordered to be taken to a place of confinement, but when mounted on horseback to accompany the soldiers, nothing could induce the horse to move; every effort was in vain.

Four horses were tried, but all to no purpose; then, in fear and consternation, the General ordered the child to be restored to its mother.

Tranquillity being restored, her husband returned, recovered his position, and a home life was resumed. He gave Frances full liberty to indulge in her piety and charity towards the poor; in founding her convent; in living, as it were, before God's altar. Ecstasies and miracles proclaimed her sanctity. Frequently after Holy Communion she was seen raised up from the ground in blissful contemplation; and when the poor would have run short of food, bread and wine were multiplied as her holy hands distributed them.

After the death of her husband she most humbly sought admission, prostrate at the door, to the convent she had founded. No work was too menial, no labour too hard, no vigil too long for blessed Frances. Her rich friends were disgusted at her abject poverty, but contempt was sweet to her humble soul. Her heart was wholly and thoroughly for God, yet full of sympathy for others. There was no doubt or misgiving in the prayers of Frances. Once when she saw the poor Sisters wearied and thirsty in their humble and penitential work, she meekly reproached our Blessed Lord, and asked had He forgotten them. Immediately on the withered branches of the vines around them bunches of grapes burst forth for their refreshment.

And all these years the Angel was ever her visible companion. But his sight only made her long for heaven the more. Where was the sting of death to Frances? She had been dead to this world for years and years. So that when the end came it was a festival and a triumph for her. So ardent and enraptured an expression lit up her countenance that the

priest and Sisters wondered. She cried out: "The heavens open! Angels descend! My Guardian has finished his task. He stands and beckons me to follow him." These were her last words: the Angels had taken her. At her death the popular emotion was indescribable. Her blessed name was heard, her intercession invoked in every street and piazza and church in the Holy City. Her charity had made her known to all; she was the mother of the poor.

Piety

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

MARCH 12, 604

"Be thou vigilant, labour in all things, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry."—2 TIM. iv. 5.

PIETY may be described as a tenderness of heart which loves God above all things, and overflows in love and kindliness upon our neighbour. Youth is the time for this virtue to be engrafted and nurtured in the soul, and blessed is the man who preserves its vitality throughout life. What a blessing it must be, then, to have good parents and a holy training in youth!

The boyhood and youth of the great St. Gregory exemplify this. He was surrounded by Saints. His grandfather was Pope; his father, a Senator of Rome, forsook the world and died in sanctity; his mother and two aunts are found in the calendar of the Saints. He inherited piety, and its spirit was fostered in him by those around. His home stood a hundred yards or so from the Coliseum, the theatre of the martyrdom of so many Saints, and there the thoughtful Gregory, as boy and youth, would spend hours repicturing to himself all that he had learned from father and mother of those heroes of the Cross.

Early in life he wished to become a priest, but, de-

ferring to his father's wishes, he studied and fitted himself for his position in the world to such purpose that, at the age of thirty-four, the Emperor Justin nominated him Prætor, or chief magistrate of Rome.

Had he preserved his piety through those dangerous years from boyhood to manhood? Yes; and the very next year Gregory gives us the answer "in deed and in work." Wealth, honours, popularity were all his, and he left them all to follow Christ. Selling his estates, he built six monasteries in Sicily, and that of St. Andrew's in Rome. He bequeathed what was over to the poor, and became a Benedictine monk in the Roman monastery that he had built—the last and least in his own opinion of that band of earnest followers of St. Benedict. Instead of the jewelled robes of Prætor, he wore and was proud of the poor monastic garb.

The poor of the city missed their loved and popular and charitable magistrate, but they soon regained him, for the Pope named him almoner to the poor—the poor whom St. Gregory loved. Every friend was importuned for help for them. In looking after the poor it must have been, that he noticed the Anglo-Saxon slaves in the Forum. We know the story, and how he resolved in his heart to go and preach the Gospel to that far-off land in the north; how he won over a few friends in the monastery to join him, obtained permission from the Holy Father, and actually set out to convert England. The poor of Rome missed him, and learning the truth, gathered round the Pope, after his Mass, beseeching him to recall their Father Gregory. The Pope had to yield; fleet messengers were sent forth, and the would-be Apostle overtaken and brought back, meekly submitting to obedience.

A severe plague broke out in Rome, and the Sovereign Pontiff having died, St. Gregory organized the procession of the Litanies to beg God's mercy and the cessation of the pestilence. Here we behold his piety pre-eminent. The picture of our Lady, painted by St. Luke, was carried, the long procession wound its way through streets lined with the sick and dying, for we are told that eighty people died during the hours of the procession. Such was the devotion of the crowd that legends tell us that Angels were heard singing as they passed along, and as they drew near the Vatican an Angel was seen to sheath his sword in token that the plague was to cease; and does not the bronze figure of St. Michael, bearing testimony to this belief, surmount the castle by the Tiber to this day?

No wonder we find Gregory chosen to fill the chair of Peter. His humility tried in every way to frustrate the popular wish, but he was compelled to be resigned and obey. And how he regarded the dignity we learn from this: he was the first of the Sovereign Pontiffs to sign his apostolic letters from "the servant of the servants of God"—a form which is used to this day. It was at this time that an Angel reminded him of his custom of feeding twelve poor men each day, and how he, the Angel, had been present once himself, making the thirteenth, and how Gregory had broken up his mother's silver dish, and given them the pieces, as all his money was exhausted. That day, the Angel told him, you merited to be consecrated Pope.

His piety had now full scope, for all the people of the world were his poor people now. In fourteen years how could he have found time to do all that is recorded of him? Delicate always, he was now frequently

prostrated with painful illnesses, yet, like St. Paul, he "laboured more than all."

If his writings were the only work of his Pontificate we should marvel. His homilies, his commentaries on the Scriptures, his book "On the Pastoral Care," the eight hundred of his letters that are still preserved! As his name signifies, he was the *watchful* shepherd of Christ's flock. Watchful from Constantinople to Seville, from Africa to Britain! Rebuking, comforting, praising, urging, standing firm against heresies and abuses. Reforming Church music, the liturgy of the Mass, the education of the clergy—nothing could escape that all-embracing love of God and his neighbour—the piety of Gregory. Devotion to the souls in Purgatory found in him a friend and faithful promoter. And the poor Anglo-Saxons were not forgotten! He chose Apostolic men from his own monastery, and to them he entrusted the work that he had longed to accomplish himself, so that he himself is deservedly styled the Apostle of England.

What he had loved as a boy was dear to the heart of the Pope. Witness that miracle that he worked when the Ambassadors of the Emperor asked for relics to take home to their master. Gregory ordered dust from the arena in the Coliseum to be given them, and when they demurred, regarding it as a slight, the holy Father took the little bag of dust in his hands, and lovingly rebuked them: "What, not honour that dust soaked with the blood of so many hundreds of martyrs!" and gently caressing it, blood trickled from the holy dust.

In those days of his power, of strenuous labours as ruler of the Church, how blessed Gregory looked back to the calm of the cloister. In his humility he ever begged the prayers of his friends for one so worthless,

yet with such a charge committed to him. To St. Leander in Spain he wrote: "I remember with tears how I have lost the calm harbour of my repose. If you love me, assist me with your prayers." His humility prevented him from seeing the mighty work that he was doing throughout the length and breadth of God's Church—work that has lasted to this day; work that has guided and saved so many souls of pastors and of the flock; work that was only possible to one who, utterly regardless of self, of weariness, of painful sickness, was animated with glowing piety towards God and God's creatures.

The Love of Christ

ST. BENEDICT

MARCH 21, 543

"As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."—EPH. vi. 6.

A MULTITUDE is not an army, but with a leader and with discipline it becomes one. Previous to the days of St. Benedict, who was born in 480, there were thousands of earnest men, who left all things to follow Christ, who peopled the desert to be safe from the snares of the world, and there led austere and holy lives.

This spirit spread, the numbers increased, and God raised up a leader, another Moses, to marshal the multitude and guide it to the promised land. The Patriarch of the monks of the West did this by founding his Order and establishing it according to his Holy Rule. These soldiers of Christ took the oath of loyalty, agreed to the condition of the warfare, and boldly faced the conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. They had enthusiasm for the cause, there was cohesion in their ranks, they had a weapon given them that must prevail. Their weapon was obedience, their strength stability in the Order, the spirit that animated them was the love of Christ.

A leader of men diffuses the spirit that fills his own heart throughout the hearts of his followers.

St. Benedict's spirit is that of devotedness to " our true King Christ," as he styles our Blessed Lord in his Rule. The single word " Christ " discloses to us the spiritual impulse that made St. Benedict what he was; it tells us " quod amavit et quod docuit " (what he loved and what he taught). He says again: " Let us prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ." Mark, he does not say to the love of God, but to Christ. Christ, Who was not only God but man, and Who therefore could be more easily pictured to men's minds and realized than the unseen God. Christ, Who had bade them to leave all things to follow Him; Christ, to Whom they might exclaim, as Peter did: " Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Christ therefore was the energizing spirit of each and every one of that army that was enrolled under the standard of St. Benedict. The love of Christ was handed down as the most sacred tradition. The Rule tells us that " the Abbot takes the place of Christ," hence the holiness of obedience to his every word. The porter was taught to look upon the guest or the poor as Christ; to the infirmarian the sick were Christ; to the brethren each to the other was Christ, so that each endeavoured to forestall the other in kindness and in charity. When they prayed they spoke to Christ; when they read the Scriptures they listened to His words. And according to each one's disposition, one was struck by some feature in Christ's life, another by some loving word that seemed destined for him. It was this love of Christ that prompted them all to be what they were.

Some, like Mary, sat at His feet absorbed in contemplation, and lived and died in the cloister. Some, because He had said " Suffer little children to come

unto Me," loved to teach them and lead them—pioneers in the Catholic schools. Others, because "He had come to seek and to save," sought permission to leave their monasteries, and became the Apostles of pagan nations.

See how history bears all this out. From the twelve monasteries that St. Benedict founded rapidly his Order increased, so that it may be said for some centuries the religion of Europe was not only Catholic but Benedictine. The Faith of Christ was preached by Benedictine missionaries, taught in Benedictine schools, guarded by Benedictine Bishops, defined by Benedictine Popes, of whom forty have ruled over the destinies of the Church. The consequence was that the spirit of St. Benedict permeated the Church, whilst the Church's fecundity of development and imperishableness gave vitality to this spirit. The doctrines and traditions that have now become the grand instruments of the restoration of faith and devotion passed through these intermediate Benedictine ages. And there they did not lie disregarded and unknown, but one and all were beautified and developed by some Benedictine monk.

For instance, take what is often thought to be a modern devotion—viz., that to the souls in Purgatory. It is said of the Benedictine St. Gregory the Great that if it had not been for him, devotion to the Holy Souls would have almost been unknown for centuries. And it was St. Odilo, too, who first instituted the observance of All Souls' Day. Again, those who think that devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary is of recent date should remember the Benedictines—St. Bernard, her loving son and champion, and St. Anselm of Canterbury, who defended her Immaculate Conception, and established its festival in England. And devotion to the

Sacred Heart of Jesus was taught six hundred years ago by St. Gertrude to her Benedictine nuns.

Moreover, how many countries in Europe received the faith from Benedictine missioners? Our forefathers were converted by them; and they in their turn sent out SS. Boniface, Switbert, Willebrord, and many others to be the evangelizers of Germany. These are worthy patrons of the "Propagation of the Faith." The Religious Orders who serve the hospitals were not needed then, for the monasteries and convents of old were the homes of the poor and the sick. Most of them likewise had schools attached where they, the forerunners of the Christian Brothers, instructed alike the children of the poor and the rich.

And there is a devotion much needed in these days that is peculiarly Benedictine—loyalty to the Holy See. For the chief founders of the Temporal Power and special champions of the liberty of the Church were Benedictine Popes; for instance, the first three Gregories, and Hildebrand, the seventh Gregory, who lived and died in its defence.

In age succeeding age we find the Church putting forth "Christ" under some new aspect, developing some new phase of the undying life of "Christ." Take the more modern Religious Orders, the new branches of the Church, are they not all of the same parent stock? "Christ" was the life of the old Benedictine spirit, and the newer ones are called "the Society of Jesus," "the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer," and of "the Sacred Passion."

Yet how dare we claim this Christ-worship as the spirit of St. Benedict? It is the spirit of the Gospel, the realization of the Incarnation. Quite true; and yet it is the spirit of St. Benedict, for he taught it and

developed it amongst his monks. For while the Church was distracted with heretics, the Arians and Pelagians, the special enemies of Christ—for they denied His Divinity, the efficacy of His Redemption and of His Grace—whilst thus Christ was blasphemed, the humble Benedict, unknown to the world, learned in his own heart, and then taught that Christ-worship which has taken such a hold on the hearts of men that it is still vigorous, still developing though fourteen hundred years old!

True Repentance

ST. MARY OF EGYPT

APRIL 9, ABOUT 430

"Because he turneth away himself from all his iniquities which he hath wrought, he shall surely live."—EZECH. xviii. 28.

TRUE repentance is not merely sorrow, tears, and prayers. The heart must turn from evil, the will determine to abandon its evil ways and avoid the occasions of sin. Is not this the explanation of frequent relapses, of confessions repeating the same sad tale of falling again and again into the same sins almost without a struggle? There is no chance of persevering unless one cuts oneself adrift from the occasions that have hitherto caused our ruin. Then, though memory or a disordered imagination may conjure up the old temptations, though the devil tries his wiliest artifices, persevering prayer and God's unfailing grace may keep us safe from falling.

The life of St. Mary of Egypt gives us an example of this perfect repentance. When a mere girl, she ran away from her parents, and sought the pleasures of a city life, and was known in all the vicious haunts of Alexandria. In after years she herself related the events of her life to Abbot Zosimus, who had it committed to writing.

After some years of this utterly wicked life, she

noticed one day a great number of people of all kinds embarking for Palestine. She learned that it was a pilgrimage bound for Jerusalem, and out of pure wickedness she joined them, wishing for a change, and hoping amidst so many to find some loose characters who would easily be tempted to join in her evil ways. On board ship, and even in Jerusalem, she continued her abandoned life. One day great crowds were wending their way to the church, and through curiosity she joined them. It was the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross; the relic was to be exposed, and the pious throng to be admitted to venerate the sacred wood on which we were redeemed. Mary was entering, but in the porch she was arrested by an unseen power and was unable to move. She tried and tried again, but was powerless to enter the church. Fear smote her, and for the first time a dread of her sinfulness overcame her, and she felt that that was the cause that held her back. That fear was the beginning of God's grace, and, looking up, there above her hung a picture of Mary, the blessed Mother of God. The glance of that holy countenance shed a light into her heart, and, falling on her knees in tears, the poor sinner begged God's pardon and His Mother's help. She vowed within her heart to change her life; then, rising, she found no obstacle, but, humbly entering the church, slowly followed the long line of the faithful as it approached the Sacred Cross, which, on their knees, they venerated and kissed. Mary, with a humble and broken heart, did so too!

How many would have thought that was repentance? But it was only the beginning of repentance, for she had to turn from her sins and flee the occasions of them.

When the ceremony was over and the crowd dis-

persed, Mary visited the picture in the porch, and, praying there, besought her holy Mother to help and succour her. In answer to her prayer for guidance, a voice spoke to her, bidding her quit the world and its dangerous allurements, to retire into the desert and give herself to God. After making her confession, she obeyed, and, henceforth dead to the world, she passed into the uninhabited country beyond the Jordan, and dwelt there for forty-seven years.

But her memory was not dead, nor her imagination, nor the enemy of her soul. For seventeen years she was afflicted with all the vilest temptations that her wicked past could bring before her. But the occasion of sinning she had banished, and constant prayer, the hardships, and the fastings that she endured, and the ever-present grace of God, gave her the victory. Then peace of soul dawned on her; God lavished His blessings and favours upon the holy penitent—yea, and actually inspired her with knowledge of her religion and the Holy Scriptures, as her life testifies.

For many years Abbot Zosimus had dwelt in a monastery near the Jordan, and it was the custom of the monks after Mass and Holy Communion on the first Sunday of Lent to separate and go forth into the desert until Palm Sunday, living a strict hermit's life in silence, watching, and fasting. Zosimus went forth like the rest, and one day, in his secluded retreat, he noticed the strange apparition of a human being, who called him and addressed him by his name. Certain that she could have only known his name by a revelation, he approached her, and questioned her in the name of God. It was Mary, the holy penitent. Humbly and with tears she told him the story of her life, and that this was the forty-seventh year, as well

as she could reckon, since she had come to the desert. The Abbot noticed that she used Scripture phrases, and asked did she study the Holy Writ in her solitude? She replied that she could not even read, but that God had taught her much, and Mary, His Mother, had always shown herself her faithful helper and protectress.

Before leaving him, she begged that he would bring her Holy Communion on Holy Thursday, and promised to meet him on the banks of the river. He did so, and she crossed over the river to him, as if she was walking on land, and then with all devotion she received the Blessed Sacrament. On parting, she asked that he would seek her the next year where he had first met her.

When the next Lent came round and he left his monastery once more, he sought out the place of meeting, and there he found her lying dead, and beside her an inscription, on which was simply her name, "Mary." It was on his return to his monastery that he recounted all this to his brethren, and had her life written.

That poor sinner, as was, teaches us all the perfection of repentance. Her memory has recalled many a wilful wanderer from the ways of vice, and given them courage and strength to imitate her. The blessed John Columbini was converted by reading this life of the penitent Mary. He was the chief magistrate of Sienna, taken up with the world, proud and prosperous. He gave all he had to the poor, and, to subdue his pride and worldly spirit, begged his bread in the very streets that he had paraded in riches and pomp.

Let us at least examine our repentances, and not be satisfied with a few hurried words of contrition when we go to confession, but pray for goodwill and strength, and actually break with our sins, and avoid the occasions that have led us into them.

The Deceitfulness of Riches

ST. BADEMUS, MARTYR

April 10, 376

"How hard it is for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!"—Mark x. 24.

Though our Blessed Lord has solemnly warned us of the evil of riches, how few are found who have a holy fear of them! Indeed, most men, shutting their ears to the warnings of the Scriptures, love riches, seek after them, make a god of them, so that there is no room in their heart for the love of God or the longing for their heavenly home. Even if they were worldly-wise, they should see that the warnings of Scripture are fulfilled before their eyes day after day. They should know that St. Paul is right when he says: "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10).

A striking example of the truth of these warnings we find in the martyrdom of St. Bademus and the sad apostasy of Nersan. King Sapor of Persia had for

years been cruelly persecuting the Christians of that country. Amongst these no one was more venerated than Bademus, who had given up his noble position, had distributed his wealth amongst the poor, and founded a monastery, where he dwelt, the father of many who had been attracted to him by his sanctity. But prayer, fasting, and austerities were not all that God required of him. To crown his virtues, God allowed him to fall a victim to the persecution of the tyrant in 376. Seven of his monks and himself were apprehended, loaded with chains, and cast into prison for months, and frequently Bademus was led out and scourged to force him to abjure his religion. His patient fortitude inflamed the zeal of his fellow-Christians, and won many others over to the faith.

At this time the young Prince Nersan of Aria was accused of refusing to worship the Persian deity and confessing the name of Christ. This, indeed, was a prize that the avaricious tyrant gloated over, for Nersan was exceedingly wealthy. At first he boldly professed his religion, and was scourged and cast into prison. But there in his misery he was tempted. Why should he lose his wealth and his young life when he might enjoy it for years? If he outwardly conformed and offered sacrifice, in his heart he might still worship the true God. Thus he dallied with the tempter. The words of Scripture were verified: "Many have been brought to fall for gold, and the beauty thereof hath been their ruin. Gold is a stumbling-block to them that sacrifice to it: woe to them that eagerly follow after it, and every fool shall perish by it" (Ecclus. xxxi. 6, 7).

Nersan sent word to the King that he was willing to renounce his faith. This was not what Sapor wished

for; if the young Prince conformed, he would retain his wealth and possessions. Remembering the veneration in which St. Bademus was held, he craftily proposed that Nersan, to show his sincerity and his zeal for the national religion, should interview Bademus, convert him too, or, if he remained obdurate, be his executioner himself. Picture the tortures and agony of soul of this pretending apostate. He feared the holy Abbot; he knew the scornful rebukes that would overwhelm him; and what would happen then? He could not become his murderer, and unless he did his own life would pay the forfeit. Again the tempter was at his side, insinuating that Bademus had nothing to lose; he was a poor monk, and he was old, whereas youth and the pleasures of wealth were his. If Bademus was obdurate and faithful to Christ, someone would put him to death, so why not he himself, and thus secure his riches?

Irresolute, wretched, cowardly, he at length accepted the vile proposal. Bademus was brought to him, and a sword was given Nersan; if persuasion failed, the weapon must finish the interview. Terror seized him, his parched tongue refused to utter a word; whereas Bademus, simple in the majesty of a God-fearing champion of the faith, spoke to him: "Miserable man, how far have thy cowardice and love of riches led thee? I rejoice to die for Christ, but, alas! that I should die by thy hand! Why shouldst thou add this crime of murder to thine apostasy?" Though driven to do it, remorse and fear unnerved the wretched youth, and his cowardly hand could not strike the martyr dead; but the sight of blood frenzied him, and he hacked the patient martyr to death.

His iniquity was complete. Apostate and murderer,

and all for love of money! But, alas! the remorse of the foul deed! He was led back to the King to be restored to liberty and the riches that had beguiled him to this impiety. But he should have thought of St. Paul's words: "Charge the rich of this world . . . not to trust to the uncertainty of riches" (1 Tim. vi. 17). For the wily Sapor found an excuse to break his promise, for he hated the thought of losing such wealth. "Is this the hero," he exclaimed, "that has slain the enemy of the Persian god? This wretched, trembling, fear-stricken man! He is ashamed of the deed that he has done, and in his heart he still believes in Christ." And forthwith he ordered him to be tortured, and then put to death. Oh "the deceitfulness of riches"! (Mark iv. 19).

The words of St. James might have been written for this very man, the apostate Nersan: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, . . . your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up for yourselves wrath against the last days" (Jas. v. 1-3).

Professing the Faith

ST. PETER THE MARTYR

APRIL 29, 1252

"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."—LUKE xxii. 32.

NOTHING is more necessary for a child than that it should be well grounded in its faith. Yet to know it, to understand it even, is not sufficient. The young Catholic must be taught to prize it, and to cling to it as something dearer than life. Otherwise, how will it fare with that soul when the child grows up, and has to go forth and face the world, daily confronting sneers and criticisms against its religion? Human respect makes cowards of most of us at some time or other, and the wiles of the devil are ever being woven round our footsteps on our way through life. It is not enough to have the faith; we must have the courage to profess it. "For he that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty" (Luke ix. 26).

All this we see most strikingly exemplified in the life and death of the great Dominican, St. Peter the Martyr. He was born at Verona, in the North of Italy, in the year 1205, of parents who were infected with the Manichean heresy. His father, nevertheless, sent him to a Catholic school, as he desired him to be well educated, making sure that he himself could easily

efface from the mind of the boy any Catholic doctrine that he might learn. One of the first things that he was taught was the Apostles' Creed, which these heretics held in abhorrence. Questioned at home as to what he had learned, Peter replied: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." In vain his father and uncle endeavoured to make him believe that this was wrong—that not God, but the evil spirit, had created all things that were visible; for many things in the world were bad, and therefore God could not have created them.

The boy steadfastly professed the right faith with the wisdom and courage of a man. Instead of being deceived, Peter's faith in his religion was strengthened; so much so, that on being sent to Bologna to study, where at that time there was great licentiousness and depravity, instead of being corrupted, he was horrified at the wickedness around him, and gave himself to God with the utmost devotion.

At the age of fifteen even, he sought admission to the Order of Friars Preachers, and for a little while he had the blessing of St. Dominic's guidance and help. Later on he was professed, was a model even amongst those fervent early disciples of St. Dominic, completed his studies, and in due time was ordained priest. In every way was he specially fitted for the apostolic work of preaching. Mindful of the dangers from which he had escaped himself, with all zeal did he throw himself into the work of instructing and preaching throughout Tuscany and Lombardy. Countless multitudes thronged to hear him, and countless sinners and heretics were through him reconciled to their God.

But the shadow of the Cross had to fall upon Peter that his soul should be still more purified. A grievous accusation was made against him—a calumny of which

he could not prove himself innocent without disclosing that he had been favoured with a celestial vision, and this his humility would not allow him to do. He was punished, silenced from preaching, and condemned to a solitary life for months. One day in his despondency he complained to our Blessed Lord that he was punished and yet not guilty. Our Lord appeared to him, marked with His sacred wounds, and said: "And what did I do that I should suffer as I did?" And He added the words of the text—words once spoken to that other Peter, prince of the Apostles: "I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not." Our Saint's soul was filled with consolation, and with patience he united his sufferings with those of his Master, Who had endured even the Cross for love of him. After a time his innocence was clearly established, and he was restored to his public duties with all honour.

His preaching henceforth had more fervour, won more souls to God, and was marked by more miraculous events than hitherto. But though so many followed him, and listened to him with joy and rapture, yet enemies among the heretics, instigated by the evil one, were constantly trying him and tempting him. They longed to see him try to work a miracle and fail, as when they defied him, as he was preaching in the glaring sun, to procure shade for his auditors, if he was the friend of God; and immediately he said a short prayer, and a cloud in a moment came and overshadowed just where they stood. Another time one of the heretics pretended to be dying, and sent for St. Peter to come and cure him. The Saint came, revealed to the man that he knew his deceit, and forthwith the hypocrite was seized with agonizing pains, so that his friends feared that he would die indeed. Then Peter cured him—cured both body and soul;

for he was converted, and many others at the miracle.

The number of cures that he wrought upon the sick, and the honours that were bestowed upon him by two succeeding Popes, filled the Manicheans with consternation and hatred. They plotted against him, and sought to hire assassins to take his life. St. Peter foreknew the time of his martyrdom, and preached about it, and foretold his enemies that he would work more against them when dead than he had done in life. And this came true, through the countless miracles that were wrought by his intercession after his martyrdom. It was his custom at Mass, when elevating the chalice, to pray that he might shed his blood for Christ, Who had so lovingly shed His for him. He knew and felt that his prayer would be heard.

It was Holy Week, and the assassins, like Judas, had received their pay on the Wednesday, and lay in ambush for him as he journeyed through the fair country from Como to Milan. As he passed by one of them, Carinus by name, rushed upon him, striking him two blows on the head with his axe, and then, turning, killed his companion, who may have wished in his remorse to have spared the Saint. Peter, raising himself on his knees, murmured: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my soul," and then, with a louder voice, cried, "Credo!" (I believe in God), as the murderer struck him dead. Converted by the prayers of the martyr, Carinus himself told how the Saint had died, and through God's grace he persevered a penitent for many years.

That last cry of the blessed martyr was the "Credo" —the profession of faith—of the little boy; the "Credo" that he had been preaching all his missionary life! Even death could not still that voice, for his memory lingers in the hearts of the faithful.

The Sign of the Cross

SS. CYPRIAN, CHRYSOSTOM, PAULINUS OF NOLA, OSWALD, AND OTHERS

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—GAL. vi. 14.

"BY tradition we do many things." And veneration and devotion cling the more to such practices as time rolls on. Then what reverence should a Catholic in these days have for the sign of the Holy Cross, when we find even about the year 200 a great Church writer using these words: "By tradition we do many things—the ceremonies at Baptism; Mass for the martyrs and the dead; standing at prayers on Sunday; and the *sign of the Cross*, which we make upon our forehead at every action, coming in, going out, and whatever we do" (Tertullian).

From the time of this early declaration we find a continued stream of proof of this same reverent use of the Cross. St. Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr, A.D. 258, mentions the sign of the Cross at Baptism and on other occasions, and adds: "A Christian is fortified by the defensive sign of the Cross."

St. John Chrysostom, A.D. 407, in an eloquent passage in his fifty-fourth homily, says: "Let us carry about the sign of the Cross as a crown; let no one blush at the ensign of salvation. By it is everything in religion

done: the Cross is employed if a person is regenerated, or fed with the mystical food, or ordained. Whatever else is to be done, the ensign of victory is ever present; therefore we have it in our houses, paint it on our walls and windows, make it on our foreheads, and always carry it devoutly in our hearts. We must not be content with forming it; we must do it with great sentiments of faith and devotion. If you thus form it on your face, no unclean spirit will be able to stand against you when he beholds the instrument which has given him the mortal stab. If we tremble at the sight of the place where criminals are executed, think what the devils must suffer when they see that weapon by which Christ stripped them of their power and cut off the head of their leader. Be not ashamed of so great a good which has been bestowed upon you, lest Christ should be ashamed of you when He shall appear in glory, and this standard be borne before Him, brighter than the rays of the sun: for then the Cross shall appear, speaking, as it were, with a loud voice, 'This sign has opened gates, deadened malignant poisons, and healed wounds.' If it has broken down the gates of hell, unbolted those of paradise, opened its glory to us, destroyed the empire and weakened the power of the devil, what wonder if it overcomes poisons and wild beasts?"

That "delight of ancient piety," as the writings of St. Paulinus of Nola are styled, tell us how he was an eyewitness of a raging fire, which baffled all endeavours to master it, being extinguished by a tiny relic of the Holy Cross. And in sending a relic of the same, encased in gold, to his friend St. Sulpicius Severus, he styles it: "A great present in a little atom, a defence of our temporal, a pledge of our eternal, life."

Even enemies of the Church give testimony how the Cross was revered. The Emperor Julian, the apostate, scoffed at the orthodox: "You adore the wood of the Cross, make its sign on your forehead, and engrave it on the porch of your houses." This is testimony indeed! It is no new thing, then, for the world, incited by the devil, to scoff at the Cross, and we must answer, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem did to Julian: "We glory in this sign of the precious Cross, since Christ triumphed on it, and it is to us the admonition of all virtue." And again: "The faithful arm and entrench themselves with the sign of the Cross, overthrowing and breaking by it the power and every assault of the devils; for the Cross is to us an impregnable rampart."

The other St. Cyril, the one of Alexandria, has a similar passage. "Let us not be ashamed of the sign of the Cross; sign it openly on thy forehead, that the devils, seeing the royal standard, may fly afar away trembling. . . . Be not ashamed of the Cross! The Angels glory in it, for they said: "Whom do ye seek? Jesus Who was crucified?' They could have said, 'The Lord Jesus'—but the Cross is His crown!"

The lives, not only of the Saints, but of earnest, pious Catholics, from the earliest times until our own day, are witnesses that these words are no idle boast. In prayer, in temptation, on awakening, in fear, at every turn good people arm themselves with the Holy Cross. And the faith with which it has been used has been blessed by countless miracles. It would be endless work to enumerate the cures that the Saints have wrought by simply making the sign of the Cross. To each mind various examples will occur. For instance, St. Lawrence the Martyr, who by the sign of the Cross

gave light to the blind; St. David, restoring eyesight to his old master by the sign of the Cross; St. Vedast, accompanying King Clovis and importuned by the blind beggar, could not refuse him, and with the sign of the Cross gave him his sight. And the like happened to St. Eugenius of Carthage, and the King and the multitude of the city witnessed how the Cross opened the eyes of the blind.

But more to our purpose it is to learn how the untutored, the recently converted, like our own forefathers in the time of King Oswald, had learned to love and venerate the Cross. St. Oswald had embraced the faith with his whole heart, and not like his brother had done, and, seeing his kingdom mercilessly devastated and ravaged, was forced in bounden duty to give battle, though the enemy was far superior in numbers to his own little army. The evening before the holy King caused a great wooden cross to be hurriedly made, and he himself supported it whilst it was securely fixed in the earth, and then, with his Christian warriors around him, he prayed that the Almighty, seeing that they were fighting in a just cause, would defend them by the Holy Cross and grant them the victory. Prostrate they besought the Lord, and then, undaunted by the numbers and ferocity of their enemies, they fought and proved victorious.

Venerable Bede tells us that this was the first trophy of the faith, for neither Cross nor Church had yet been erected in the kingdom of the Mercians. It remained there famous, a place of pilgrimage, till the monks of Hexham built a church where it had stood. For one hundred and fifty years successive miracles were wrought by that Cross—a little chip from it, or water in which such had been steeped, yea, even the moss

growing on it—by such all manners of the afflicted were cured.

Such memories cannot fail to do us good in these days when human respect, trying to stand well with the world, fear of avowing the things we reverence, make us minimize the demands of our faith to reverence holy things. How can we be excused if we fail in reverence, in trust, in devotion to the Holy Cross? Where shall we hide ourselves when our Blessed Lord, with His glorious Cross, shall summon us to judgment?

The Desire for Holy Communion

SS. IMELDA AND JULIANA

MAY 12, 1333; JUNE 19, 1340

"Thou hast given him his heart's desire."—Ps. xx. 2.

FREQUENT—yea, daily—Communion is for those who desire to obey the will of God, who desire to be more closely united to Him, who desire to use the Divine medicine of the Holy Eucharist as a remedy for passion and frailty. This constitutes the right and pious disposition required by the decree of our Holy Father, Pius X., on frequent Communion.

The Sacraments, though they work their spiritual effects by their own power, are more efficacious in proportion to the good disposition of the recipient. On our desire, then, for Holy Communion depends in so great a degree the result, the blessing, the graces, the transformation of soul, which our Blessed Lord loves to work in the heart of the communicant.

Communion is so easy, we are so imperfect and frail, and frequentation has the tendency to lessen reverence and preparation, that the holy desire may grow fainter and fainter. Is the desire keen and earnest when we let ourselves glide into daily and numerous imperfections? if our conscience has to reproach us that we are lazy and unpunctual, distracted, perfunctory at

our prayers, that we are sensual at our meals, untruthful in little things, selfish, unkind, disobedient, too fond of ease, too fond of money and the luxuries that money obtains? Is our desire such as it should be, considering the blessed results of Holy Communion? "When Christ liveth in us, our thoughts, our senses, our impulses, our will, and our activity assume a resemblance to the hidden life of the Eucharistic Saviour, and become Divine" (Pope Urban IV.). Is ours the desire that is expected and looked for the Sacred Heart of our Lord? Is it a desire with which we dare approach Him Whose desire for our souls brought Him to the manger, filled His Heart at the Last Supper, when He said, "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you"—the desire that animated Him through the Agony, the Scourging, the three hours on the Cross?

Naturally some may be afraid that there is a danger in too frequently communicating of becoming thereby wanting in reverence and earnestness, and that therefore it would be better for them to receive only seldom and at long intervals. But would they be more desirous then of giving themselves wholly to God? And they forget, too, the urgency of frequently received Holy Communion; the object of which is "that the faithful, by union with God, may receive strength to overcome concupiscence, to expiate the lighter faults of daily occurrence, and to avoid grave sins." We know our disposition—selfish and frail; we know our worldly surroundings; alas! we know too well the temptations that assail us, and how easily, how cowardly we fall. How, then, can we hope for security without the frequent, and perhaps daily, help of Holy Communion?

And the food of our soul is especially to be longed for at the hour of our death—that hour when weakness is so great and temptation so strong. And can we make sure of a Holy Communion then better than by having frequented Holy Communion in life, with a longing, urgent desire, which should be intensified and inflamed by constant reception? At death it is to be hoped that all these blessed desires of long ago may return laden with graces and consolations. "My soul hath desired Thee in the night; yea, and my spirit within me in the morning; early will I watch to Thee. . . . Lord, Thou wilt give us peace, for Thou hast wrought all our works for us" (Isa. xxvi. 9-12).

In the lives of the Saints God has shown us what desire—holy desire—can bring to pass. First, let us learn from a little child, the youngest Saint, not a Martyr, recognized by the Church. In the year 1333, in the Dominican Convent at Bologna, Imelda, a child of rich parents, was noted above all for her piety and devotion to Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. She was consumed with a longing for the day of her First Communion. Repeatedly she begged the Sisters and her confessor to be allowed the privilege of receiving the Holy Eucharist. At that time in Bologna it was the custom for the First Communion to be deferred till children were of the age of fourteen, and Imelda was only eleven. Three long years to wait, and her heart melting for love of her Divine Saviour! Day after day she prayed and longed—for "He is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Kings xxiii. 5).

Superiors and confessors might refuse, but there was One Whose Heart could not! He Who had said "Suffer little children to come unto Me" could not prolong that grievous disappointment. With desire He

Himself had desired, and He took pity on the desire of the heart of that child. During Mass on the vigil of the Ascension, the Sisters approached the altar rails, and in her place in the chapel knelt Imelda, praying and weeping that she could not share their happiness. And when the community had received and were returning to their places, a heavenly fragrance filled the church, and a luminous Host shone radiantly over the head of the child. Devout was the awe and wonder, and word was taken to the priest as he finished the Mass. He returned, and, reverently kneeling, held up the paten, and the Host gently descended upon it. The priest understood what His Lord would have him do, and Imelda made her First Communion! The Lord "will do the will, the desire, of them that fear Him; He will hear their prayer, and save them" (Ps. cxliv. 19). The transport of joy and love was too great for the tender bodily frame, and the happy child closed her eyes, and in "the kiss of the Lord" breathed forth her pure soul to go and render an eternal thanksgiving in heaven!

We find a second example, just seven years after this, in Florence, of how devout Communions during life intensify the desire of the soul to such a degree that God could not refuse a miracle to satisfy the dying. St. Juliana of Falconieri, worn out by fasting and austerities, was dying in her old age in the convent. Painful maladies she bore with patience and even joy, but there was one affliction—the most cruel of all. She was deprived of Holy Communion by reason of the weakness of her stomach, which rejected all food. How often had she prayed for this last consolation! How had she pictured it to herself, and longed with languishing desire for this "token of future glory" to be her

solace and her strength at the end! At length it was granted to the dying nun that the Blessed Sacrament should be brought to her cell, that she might adore It and die in Its Presence. Still more she craved; she prayed that It might be laid upon her breast! It was so. The Sacred Host disappeared, and Juliana breathed forth her soul in peace. "Thou hast given her her heart's desire." After her death the figure of the Host was found imprinted over her heart.

Let us cherish, then, the desire for the frequent reception of Holy Communion. Let us endeavour to intensify it time after time. We know not which may be our last Communion; but how we shall rejoice for all eternity, if at the end our desire is blessed by the reception of that dear Lord and Saviour, Who came "for us and for our salvation"!

The Example of the Martyrs

SS. BONIFACE AND AGLAË

MAY 14, 307

"Thus did this man die, leaving . . . the memory of his death for an example of virtue and fortitude."—2 MACH. vi. 31.

EXAMPLE is contagious. Whether it be good example or evil example, experience shows us its influence and power over others. In warfare, the heroic bravery of a few can fire the hearts of those around, and turn defeat into victory; and, on the other hand, a wavering or broken regiment can spread dismay and cause panic to demoralize vast numbers. And if evil example engenders carelessness and neglect of the Sacraments and religious duties, good example of piety and earnestness fills our churches, and leads increasing numbers to the altar rails.

Can it, then, be doubted that the glorious and heroic profession of their faith by those who died for Christ has influenced countless others to follow in their steps? How often do we read that bystanders, soldiers, or guards round about the martyrs have been so roused by their holy example that they, too, have confessed Christ, and bravely died for His Name's sake!

A clear and touching example of this is given to us in the history of St. Boniface. The last of the great

persecutions was dying out, and there was peace for the Christian in Rome and generally in the West; but in the East the persecution started by Diocletian was still being most cruelly waged by Galerius. In Rome there lived a rich and noble lady, Aglaë, noted for her profuse liberality and entertainments. She was a Christian, and so was Boniface, her steward. His was a strange and mixed character—genial, free-handed, kind to the poor, yet a drunkard and a slave to evil passions, in which he had involved his mistress Aglaë, for they were living a criminal and licentious life. Perhaps it was their charity to the poor that won for her the grace of the fear of God, and remorse and sorrow awoke in that guilty breast. Resolved on a change of life, Aglaë unburdened her soul to Boniface, reminding him how they were plunged in vice, and bidding him remember the judgment to come. And she continued: "I have heard it said that they who honour those who die for Christ shall repent and share in their eternal glory. We hear how many in the East are being tortured and put to death for their religion; go there for me, and I will give you money to alleviate the misery of those in prison, and likewise purchase some relics of these holy ones, and, bringing them home, I will build a church in their honour, and through God's grace, by venerating them, we may be saved by their prayers and protection."

Boniface willingly agreed to set out for the East, and laughingly remarked that perhaps his body would be brought back as a martyr's. Aglaë was grieved, and reproached him for his levity. From the commencement of the journey he was a changed man. His attendants were struck by it; for here was their master, the jovial, free-living, riotous Boniface, serious

and recollected, praying and fasting! Hearing that at Tarsus the persecution was at its height, he found his way there, and immediately on arrival, sending his servants to the inn with their horses and luggage, he himself straightway sought out the court of the Governor, where martyrs were being tried. There were no less than twenty being tortured in various cruel ways, and they were bearing their pains with such patience and fortitude that the beholders were amazed. The sight filled the soul of Boniface with holy zeal for God's honour; he reverently saluted them, and cried out to these champions of Christ: "I, too, am a Christian but a most unworthy one; pray for me that I may join with you in suffering for the holy faith. Great is the God of the Christians! Great is the God of the holy Martyrs!" The blessed example of those holy sufferers for the faith had won another witness to lay down his life for his Master. Enraged beyond measure, the Governor felt the insult of Boniface's outspoken and fearless words. Threats were useless against such courage, and the judge had immediate recourse to the keenest torments. Sharpened reeds were thrust under his nails, boiling lead poured into his mouth; but Boniface stayed not his prayers, begging of the dying martyrs to intercede for him; and their petitions, mingled with his own, besought the merciful God that they all might persevere and die for His Holy Name. The populace, aroused to see such heroism, cried out, as Boniface had done: "Great is the God of the Christians!" Fearing a tumult, the Governor withdrew, and Boniface was cast into prison. Next day, bold, undaunted, and healed of his wounds, the willing martyr stood before the tyrant once again. He was cast into a cauldron of boiling pitch, and came out unscathed!

Finally, condemned to be beheaded, he prayed for the pardon of his past sins, for the conversion of his persecutors, and then cheerfully gave himself up to his death, thus not only converted, but persevering to the end through the holy example that he had witnessed. At his death, an angel appeared to Aglaë in Rome, and assured her that God had pardoned her sins through the intercession of His martyr.

Meanwhile his attendants, wondering at his continued absence, were searching the city for him. Hearing that a stranger had been put to death, they hastened to the place of execution, and there found, indeed, relics to take home—the body and the head of their master. They ransomed his remains, and reverently returned with them to Rome. A forerunner acquainted their mistress as they neared the city; and the old record tells us that Aglaë, with priests and religious men, singing hymns and canticles, awaited the body outside Rome, and on that spot erected a monument, and later on built a church over the holy relics. After some years of a secluded, penitential life, Aglaë likewise was buried in the church.

Though not called upon to suffer and die for Christ, would not more frequent remembrance of the martyrs encourage us to face our difficulties and sufferings cheerfully for our Lord's sake? Example only affects those who witness it and are in touch with it; and can we not be near these martyrs of old in thought, in remembrance, in prayer? Oh, what helps towards heaven we miss by forgetting and ignoring the example of God's Saints!

Devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus

ST. BERNARDINE OF SIENA

MAY 20, 1440

"Father, I have manifested Thy name to men."—JOHN xvii. 6.

IT is interesting, instructive, and encouraging to us to be able to trace simple devotions, which we ourselves might practise, throughout a Saint's life, and see them develop and strengthen until they form a character heroic and holy in the highest degree. And this let us endeavour to do in the career of St. Bernardine of Siena.

He lived in the middle of the fifteenth century, a time when there had been no popular Saint in Italy for years; when the vineyard of the Lord was in sad disorder, for the great Western schism had but just ended, the Guelphs and Ghibellines were at open feud, and the pastors in Lombardy were in consternation lest the fanaticism of the followers of John Huss and Jerome of Prague should corrupt their flocks. Bernardine was destined by God to be a peacemaker, a defender of the Church's unity, and a restorer of piety and devotion.

Born on our Lady's birthday, and left an orphan at six years of age, in his simplicity of heart he looked upon the blessed Virgin as a real Mother to him. And as he grew older he knew no counsellor in his difficulties, no consoler in his troubles but his blessed Mother Mary. His delight was to visit her shrines;

to rise in the night-time to pray to her ; to fast, though so young, on Saturdays in her honour. Our blessed Lady led him on to higher paths of holiness by means of his kindness to the poor. As a child even he was noted for it, and whilst a youth occasion came to him when a plague visited the city. Nurses and doctors were carried off in such numbers that the sick and dying seemed utterly in danger of dire neglect. Our Saint, day and night, did his utmost in caring for them in every way; and finding urgent need of more assistance, by his prayers and entreaties he gathered a band of young men, who, under his leadership, took charge of the hospitals, and for months became the loving slaves of the plague-stricken. How many who were dying owed their eternal salvation to Bernardine's prayers to our Lady, and by his instilling into their hearts devotion to her!

When the plague died out, Bernardine fell ill, through months of excessive labour, almost night and day, and lay at the point of death. Four months he was an invalid. But our Lady, his blessed Mother, was guiding him still, and there was another devotion that she wished him to learn—a devotion that should characterize his future life.

There was a blind, destitute, bed-ridden woman of whom he was told, and Bernardine, as he recovered, visited her, took charge of her, and tended her lovingly until she died. She was almost speechless ; but there was one word always a murmur on her lips—the most Holy Name of Jesus! And as the pious youth bent over her, that Name found a home in his heart. He learned to love it, to realize its sweetness and its power; how in that one blessed word was every prayer the human heart need utter—a prayer of pleading, petitioning, hoping, loving, sorrowing! Of how much

good, of what incalculable blessings was that poor woman's pious habit the cause! His life's lesson was learned. He resolved to become a priest, to devote himself to reclaiming sinners, and to do it all in the power of the sacred Name of Jesus. He was to be the Apostle of the Holy Name. "There is no other Name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

St. Bernardine became a Franciscan. He chose September 8, the birthday of his Mother and his own, for all the great actions of his life. He took the habit of St. Francis on that day, and was professed on that day. And later on he offered his first Mass and preached his first sermon on that day. But here was his great affliction. His superiors destined him for a preacher, and that was what he longed to be; but, alas! his voice was weak and hoarse and indistinct; he would be almost next to useless. Others would have sought for remedies from doctors, but as he only wanted his voice for God's honour, he sought his Mother Mary's aid, and, by a miracle, a voice was bestowed upon him that resounded throughout Italy, preaching in the open air—for churches could not accommodate the crowds—winning souls to Jesus for thirty years.

What a pilgrimage of love were those long years! Preaching in hamlet and city, reconciling enemies, bringing sinners to repentance, creating a love for the Mass and Holy Communion, and always in the Name of Jesus. He carried a banner, with the Holy Name emblazoned in gold upon it; he concluded every sermon with an invocation to that blessed Name, and taught the crowds to answer, as it were, a short litany of invocations, each re-echoing the Holy Name of Jesus. Few could resist the outpourings of that loving heart. The thousands that were converted were the standing miracle of his life.

Yet sins, especially of hatred and revenge, can gain such a hold on hearts that nothing can touch them. Once, when he had pacified and won over a whole city where feuds and vendettas had been rife, he bade the whole crowd in the square to pass over to the right, as they would do at the Judgment Day, because they had forgiven each other and repented. One heart was not touched, and, scowling and insolent, one man stood alone and would not join the rest. Enmity was in his heart still. St. Bernardine besought him with tears, conjured him by the most sacred Name, Jesus, to forgive and repent. It was useless. "A hard heart shall fear evil at the last" (Ecclus. iii. 27), and the warning that he would die suddenly was treated with contempt. The prophecy came true. In a few days, without priest or Sacrament, that man died a miserable death. But seldom it was that the preacher of the Holy Name had to denounce or condemn; usually it was some miracle of love—opening the eyes of the blind, raising up the palsied, or as when stars shone round about his head as he spoke—that inspired men to give their hearts to their Saviour.

And so the years rolled on, and St. Bernardine never wearied in his journeys, and his voice was ever buoyed up by the power of that Holy Name of which he was the apostle. And his death was as we might have predicted. The toiler simply laid down to rest. It was the vigil of Ascension Day, and his brethren were chanting vespers, and the antiphon at the *Magnificat* was borne up through the cloisters, and the dying Saint heard the words, and faintly repeated them, "Father, I have manifested Thy Name to men," and peacefully, happily, he expired. O Blessed Name, Jesus! his power in life; his succour, his solace at his death.

Rome and the English Saints

SS. AUGUSTINE, EDWARD THE CONFESSOR. WILFRID, HUGH, EDMUND, THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

"Look unto the Rock whence you are hewn."—Isa. li. 1.

It is not uncommon in these days to find it voiced by non-Catholics that the Church of England is one and the same as the old Church that flourished here a thousand years ago. We hear one Bishop declaiming on the veneration of their grand cathedrals; others lamenting the disestablishment of the old Welsh churches; another claiming to be a direct descendant of SS. Dunstan, Elphege the Martyr, and Anselm of Canterbury.

Have these men forgotten that they are prelates of a Church that protested against and threw off the yoke of that Catholic religion that had flourished in this land for almost a thousand years? That their Church changed masters, casting off obedience to the Pope, and submitting to the Kings and Queens of England? It broke with the past, and established a new order of things. Then let its members and pastors stand openly for what they are, and not claim to be genuine members of the Catholic Church, which was the religion of this land in Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and Plantagenet times.

That Church had one grand distinguishing mark that may be sought for in vain in the Church of England established by law. Rome! Rome was its evangelist; to Rome loyalty and devotion were shown; Rome had authority over it! The Pope of Rome is the successor of blessed Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys, to whom was committed the feeding of the sheep, to whom Christ said, "Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18).

England received its faith direct from Rome. It was a Pope who planned the conversion of England, who had hoped to come himself, and as that could not be, sent his own Benedictine monks from the Eternal City, that galaxy of Saints—Augustine, Mellitus, Lawrences, Paulinus, and their companions. And Canterbury, York, London, Rochester, were episcopal sees, which these apostles from Rome founded, and of which they were made Bishops by authority from Rome. To blessed Peter many of the early churches were dedicated, and to this day Westminster, York, Beverley, Ripon, Peterborough, and others, by their very names—"St. Peter's"—proclaim that formerly his authority ruled there.

The conversion of Anglo-Saxon England is a glorious tribute to these apostles from Rome. No less than twenty-six Anglo-Saxon Kings and Queens left all things at the call of Christ and became monks and nuns. Many of them, too, are numbered amongst the Saints—viz., Ethelbert of Kent, Edwin and Oswald of Northumbria, Oswin of Deira, Ethelred and Ina of Wessex, and others. And almost immediately love and loyalty to Rome manifested itself by pilgrimages to the tomb and to the successors of St. Peter. St. Benedict Biscop, of Wearmouth, patron of the English

Benedictines, made six pilgrimages to Rome—and in those days a pilgrimage was long, toilsome, and dangerous—to acquire the knowledge of Roman liturgy and chant, books, pictures, and sacred vessels. Cædwalla, King of the West Saxons, being converted to the faith, "forsaking all things for the love of God," came to Rome to be baptized, and there fell ill and died. King Ina built a hospice for pilgrims in the holy city, and he and his wife are buried at St. Peter's. Amongst others we find King Alfred, sent as a child by his father Ethelwulf to be blessed and confirmed by Pope St. Leo IV. The glorious line of pilgrims ending with King Canute. St. Edward the Confessor had made a vow to make a pilgrimage to Rome, but lest his absence might be detrimental to the maintenance of the peace of the kingdom, he petitioned the Pope to commute his vow, and by the wish of the Pope Westminster Abbey (St. Peter's) was built instead.

But more strenuous times were coming, and it was not only by piety, but by obedience to the authority of Rome that both Kings and Bishops and people proved their faith and loyalty.

St. Wilfrid of Ripon, driven from his see by court envy and intrigue, humbly yielding to the persecution, journeyed to Rome; and Pope Agatho, finding him blameless and worthy, restored him to his diocese. And a second time, long after, the same thing happened, and again on appeal, Pope John VI. honourably acquitted the Saint, and sent orders to the Archbishop that he should be fittingly received and restored.

Later on, the rapacity of the Kings, even in keeping sees vacant and thus drawing their revenue, and the cruelty of the forest laws, could only be restrained by champions of justice and mercy. And these champions

were found, time after time, in the saintly Bishops of the land. Witness St. Hugh of Lincoln, who refused to be Bishop because only appointed by King Henry II. He insisted on a second and free election which had to be ratified by the Pope. He it was that so bitterly opposed the extortionate taxes of King Richard, the injustice and cruelty of the barons, and who calmly despised all their threats. St. Edmund of Canterbury, likewise, the meekest and most charitable of men, courageously opposed Henry III., for his exorbitant exactions and appropriation of the revenues of vacant sees and abbeys. He, too, appealed to the Pope, and retired into exile. We see, again, how recurrence is made to Rome in the case of St. Thomas of Hereford, who defended the lands and privileges of his Church with undaunted resolution. Thomas was chosen by his brethren the Bishops to undertake a journey to Rome to lay their grievances before Pope Nicholas IV. The fame of his sanctity alone sufficed to procure him a most favourable reception, and he was successful in his appeal. Old, worn, and suffering, he was hastening home, but was overtaken by death at Florence.

But why multiply instances, when one stands out pre-eminent for loyalty to duty, courage, and sufferings ending in martyrdom? Noting the genius for administration of his chancellor, King Henry II. wished to have him chosen as Archbishop of Canterbury. But Thomas à Becket plainly told him: "Should God permit me to be appointed, I should soon lose your majesty's favour; for several things you do in prejudice of the inviolable rights of the Church make me fear that you would require of me that which I could not agree to." Henry would not be gainsaid, and had him

elected; but Thomas refused the mitre, until the Pope's legate secured his submission. The source of all the trouble to come was an abuse, by which the King usurped the revenues of vacant bishoprics and other benefices, and deferred a long time to fill them. In resisting the oppression of the Church, St. Thomas was compelled to appeal to the Pope. The Sovereign Pontiff encouraged him to constancy, commending his zeal, and begged of him not to abandon the cause of God's Church. He returned from his exile, knowing well that it was to death he was returning, but bravely facing it, in hopes that it might bring peace to the Church. The final scene was enacted that winter's evening in Canterbury Cathedral. Calmly St. Thomas spoke to the armed men who had roughly intruded into God's house: "I am ready to die for God, for justice, and for the liberty of His Church!" And the assassins did their work. Even the guilty King bears witness to the authority of Rome. For Henry assured his Holiness that he had neither intended or commanded this execrable murder. He repented, made the amendment ordered by the Pope's legate, and restored all the Church lands and revenues which he had usurped.

Devotedness to Rome is the encouraging sign of Catholicity in England to-day. We cherish its faith, our hearts warm with loyalty to it, as prayers, alms for the Pontiff, and pilgrimages prove. And we obey its authority all the readier now because it is shorn of that power, to which kings and rulers submitted. Ah, the Church of England rebelled against that power; perhaps some day it may be disestablished—powerless, friendless—for the want of that very power to resist the rulers of that day.

Submission to the Holy Will of God

ST. ANTONY OF PADUA

JUNE 13, 1231

"I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him."—Ps. xc. 15.

"To be praised and honoured by all the world," says St. Ambrose, "is a proof that a man is worthy." We may thus judge of St. Antony, for he has been and is still one of the most popular of the Saints of God. His life teaches us, in a most marked manner, that to die to oneself is to live to God; that holiness does not consist in doing great things for God, but in humbly submitting and doing what God would have us do.

At a very youthful age, Ferdinand, as he was baptized, joined the Canons of St. Augustine at Lisbon, his native city. Highly gifted with exceptional talents, with voice and delivery of an orator, with piety that made him a model to all, he was greatly esteemed and loved in his convent. But they were to lose him. The new order of St. Francis of Assisi appealed to his heart, and the arrival at Lisbon of the relics of five Franciscan Fathers, who had been martyred in Morocco, aroused his ardour and longing for martyrdom, and he joined their order. It was then that he took the name by which he is known, in honour of St. Antony the hermit, to whom the monas-

tery, where he passed his noviciate, was dedicated. Years of earnest prayer and austerity prepared him for the end that he longed for so devoutly, and at length he obtained permission to go and preach the Gospel in Africa, hoping thereby to receive the Martyr's crown. Immediately on his arrival, a severe illness prostrated him, and he was sent back, invalided and useless. And the vessel, which should have brought him home, was driven by the winds, tempest-tossed for days, until it was wrecked on the coast of Italy. He literally begged his way to Assisi, where St. Francis and a large number of his Order were present. Antony's appearance was so wretched, for he was weak and emaciated, that no convent would receive him. At last one superior took compassion on him, and taking him for some poor invalided lay-brother, bade him make himself useful in the kitchen, and gave him a home near Bologna.

Picture for a moment how God was trying blessed Antony! With all the ardour of his youthful heart he had offered himself for martyrdom, and God would not accept him. He was clever, brilliant—and his work was in the kitchen! For nine long months in such an employment, and he never murmured or said a word! He did not refer them to his superiors at Lisbon, who thought so highly of him. He was in tribulation and God was with him, and he was learning the ways of God. To offer oneself to martyrdom is not as pleasing to Almighty God as humbly to accept His Blessed Will. When he had learned this lesson, God was with him to deliver him.

There happened to be a large gathering of Dominicans and Franciscans at Forli, and one after another the Friars' Preachers were asked to address the assembled

fathers. Each excused himself on the score of want of preparation, when, either by inspiration or for a jest, Brother Antony's superior bade the poor brother from the kitchen to preach to them. The hour had come for God to deliver his servant. In obedience he arose—humbly at first and with all due modesty—a young man surrounded by his elders and superiors; but presently burning words from the fire of his heart flew forth, and he held them spellbound with his oratory, his zeal, his love for God.

Questioning followed on their amazement, and then Antony owned who he was, where he came from, and how he stood there instead of being martyred in Morocco. Word was sent to St. Francis himself, and he commissioned St. Antony to teach theology for a time, and then to go forth and preach the Word of God.

"And I will glorify him." Italy, Sicily, France, were all witnesses of his labours. And wherever his voice was heard men's hearts were turned to God. He had given himself wholly into the hands of God, and God in return gave His power of conversion, of miracles in a wonderful degree, to Antony. God is never outdone in generosity. Henceforth his life reads like a romance; but Pope Gregory IX., who had heard him preach and styled him "the Ark of the Covenant" from his knowledge of the Scriptures, and who was still alive when St. Antony died, and who canonized him the year after his death, testifies that innumerable miracles were duly authenticated and proved by living witnesses. St. Antony only laboured in public nine years, and died at the early age of thirty-six.

In his missionary labours each town might be called

to bear witness to his miracles. At one place he forbade a thunderstorm to wet his audience in the Cathedral square, and though the city was deluged, not one drop fell upon his hearers. At another place a pious woman was prevented by her wicked husband from attending the mission. At her open window she looked wistfully towards the church, where she longed to be, three miles away, and lo! she heard St. Antony's voice distinctly, and, calling to her husband, he too came and listened, and, awestruck, fell upon his knees and was converted.

Little children, for the sake of the Divine Infant, were his special friends. With a smile and a sign of the Cross he would cure them, and even raise them to life. How many sorrowing mothers have prayed to the tender-hearted Saint in memory of this miracle which happened after his death! A poor mother, in spite of all her prayers to St. Antony, found her child at his birth dead and deformed. Beside herself with grief, she actually reproached the Saint, and bade her friends go and leave it before his statue. It was taken and laid there, and a moment after a childish cry startled the church, and turning back they found a sweet, lovely, healthy child as ever mother fondled. Another most marvellous miracle he worked in defence of his own father, who at Lisbon was in grief and sore distress. A murdered man had been found in his garden, and, naturally, suspicion pointed to him. Antony knew of this from God, and though at Padua, in Italy, by a great miracle next morning appeared at the Court of Justice at Lisbon. He recalled the murdered man to life, and commanded him to declare the innocence of his father! That same evening he was back at Padua.

"And I will glorify him." Yes, indeed, in life by his miracles upon souls and bodies. At his death, at a little convent outside Padua, the children at play in the streets of the city cried out before the news arrived, "The Saint is dead!" and the church bells in Lisbon, his native city, so far away, that same moment, as was verified afterwards, rang out of their own accord a joyous peal!

When his voice was silenced in death and his short life was over, he seemed to enter upon a new life, for so the fame of daily miracles spread, and devotion to him sprang up and has been world-wide ever since. In how many churches does his statue seem to make him live again! That statue, with the Infant Jesus in his arms, recalls a miracle of the tender love of our Lord. The man at whose house it happened himself gave testimony of it before Pope Gregory. After preaching and hearing confessions as usual, Antony retired to his room in the house of this good man who offered him hospitality. He, seeing a marvellous flood of light beaming into his garden, went out and looked through the window to see what it might be. And there was Antony kneeling, and the Divine Infant standing on a book on the table, caressing the Saint. When the vision was over, St. Antony came to his friend, and begged his silence till after his death.

The book just mentioned, with which he is mostly represented, has a lesson for us. Those were not the days of many books—no printing then—and this one was prized by St. Antony, written with his own hand, a storehouse of learning and piety, his only possession. The evil spirit, in his envy, tempted and persuaded someone to steal it. The loss was a keen one; but the Saint, unlike ourselves, was not angry with the thief,

but with the instigator of the theft, and his prayer for its restoration was so powerful that he compelled the devil, to his own confusion, to appear and so terrify the thief that he restored it. Hence the origin of the world-wide practice of praying to St. Antony for anything that is lost.

If we remember St. Antony and pray to him, surely we shall learn to have trust in God: not to seek our own way even in good things, but rather to submit to His blessed will, accept whatever He sends us, and be brave through it all, for He will be with us in our tribulation, He will deliver us, He will glorify us.

The Life of Faith

ST. PETER THE APOSTLE

JUNE 29, 68

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 PET. i. 9.

BLESSED Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, in his lifetime was the grandest example of faith. At the one word "Follow Me," he left all things and gave himself in obedience to his Divine Master. And when our Blessed Lord said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?" Simon Peter immediately made the noble answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John vi. 68-70). On another occasion, likewise, when our Lord asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?" we have another evidence of Peter's faith, and how the declaration was rewarded. "Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against

it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xvi. 15-19).

Not only then, in common with other Saints, have we to venerate St. Peter, but from his position, from the privilege of primacy accorded to him by the Son of God, have we to follow his counsels and obey his words. He had charge of the Church after his blessed Master's death, and he bids us all remember: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet. ii. 9).

That we may be worthy of this high calling, let us see how St. Peter directs us to live; on what he lays stress that we may receive the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls.

First, we must obey. We have to be children of the Church, accept its teachings, and fulfil its commands. "As children of obedience," he says. And again: "Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity" (*ibid.* i. 14, 22). He insists on obedience, because, as he warns us in his Second Epistle, he knew how many would seek their own way, their own will, perverting the religion they had been taught. Being inspired by the Holy Spirit, his words are true for all time, and read as if they were written for our own days even more than for his own. "But there were also false prophets amongst the people, even as there shall be amongst you lying teachers who shall bring in sects of perdition and deny the Lord Who bought them. And many shall follow their riotousness, through whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Pet. ii. 1, 2). Therefore we learn that the life of faith must be, in the first place, a life of obedience to the Creed, the Commandments, the apostolic traditions, the Sacraments instituted by Christ.

The second thing which St. Peter emphasizes in both his Epistles is the necessity of good works. In the early days, as well as in our own, alas! there were men who foolishly clung to the base self-deception that because Christ had redeemed us there was no need of good works to insure our salvation. "Speaking proud words of vanity, they allure by the desires of fleshly corruption. . . . Promising them liberty, whereas they themselves were the slaves of corruption" (2 Pet. ii. 18, 19). How differently does St. Peter regulate our lives. He tells us, indeed, that we have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, but he warns us that "God judgeth according to everyone's work" (1 Pet. ii. 17). He bids us edify others that "they may by the good works, which they shall behold in you, glorify God" (*ibid.* ii. 12). We have to persevere, even if persecuted, in these good works, as he says: "Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the Will of God, commend their souls in good works to the faithful Creator" (*ibid.* iv. 19). To the very end we have to persevere in a life rendered holy by prayer, pious practices, in sinlessness, frequenting the Sacraments, keeping the Commandments, as his word again tells us: "Wherefore, brethren, labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election" (2 Pet. i. 10).

All these words that have been cited would deserve respect and attention if merely the words of a Saint, but they are the words of the Head of the Church, words inspired by God! They have then to be taken to heart and obeyed. And should we not thank God that we have such clear, outspoken, unmistakable directions how to live up to the holy faith that God has given us? Plausible the world may be; veiled

attacks, the evil of which we may not detect, may be made against us; our own nature may draw us towards sin; but we must hold fast to the teaching of him, whose word cannot be gainsaid. Let us keep to St. Peter, and we shall be safe.

The world may rage against him, but in vain; the gates of hell—but they shall not prevail. And blessed Peter bids us thank God for the faith and grace which in His mercy He hath bestowed upon us; but further than that, we must, as children, obey the Church, and venture in nothing to contradict or evade its guidance; and, secondly, we must work with the graces given us; we must pave our way to heaven, step by step, with the good deeds we daily, hourly perform, following the example that Christ has left us that we should follow His steps: "Whom having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. i. 8, 9).

The Holy Eucharist

ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE

JUNE 29, 68

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering."—HEB. x. 23.

THE doctrine of the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the centre of the faith and devotion of the Catholic Church. Its children have accepted and loved this belief from the very beginning, and it seems amazing and incredible that so many, who are called Christians and believe in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, can doubt or deny it. Yet there the fact stands that so many sects refuse to accept this doctrine. Living in the world we cannot ignore this; and, moreover, living in the world we are bound to know and hold fast to this faith in the Holy Eucharist, that we may not be "led away with various and strange doctrines" (Heb. xiii. 9).

Our Divine Lord's words at the Last Supper we take in humble faith, and they are enough for us: "This is My Body"; "This is My Blood." And we recoil in horror from those who say that Christ did not mean that it was so. We shudder at the blasphemy implied that the all-wise God and the God of Truth could allow Himself purposely to be misunderstood, and not to have corrected the false impression

of the disciples, an impression which would be preached as His doctrine as long as His Church should last!

But are those who refuse to accept Christ's words in their plain and obvious meaning free to reject this doctrine? They hold by their Bible. Is there nothing else to be found there to disabuse them of their error? Is there no one else whose word they profess to honour and respect? What does the Bible tell us of the sayings and doings of St. Paul as regards the Body and Blood of Christ? Had he been deluded by Peter or John to believe "This is My Body"? There is not the slightest uncertainty. St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "For I give you to understand, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man; nor did I learn it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). And he insists that no change shall be made in his teaching, for he says: "If an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (*ibid.* 8).

What, then, is the Apostle's doctrine of the Holy Eucharist? Listen to it; he says: "I speak to you as wise men; judge ye yourselves what I say. The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the Bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. x. 15, 16). And in the following chapter, he continues on the same subject: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and, giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye and eat: this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice

after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in My Blood; this do ye, as often as you drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this Bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this Bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. xi. 23-27).

St. Paul had preached the faith at Corinth for a year and a half, and taught them the practice of the Lord's Supper, and this Epistle he sent them three years afterwards to correct abuses; for instance, he writes: "When you therefore come together into one place, it is not now to eat the Lord's Supper" (*ibid.* 20), proving by this rebuke that they had known, understood, and practised "the breaking of bread."

Too grateful for this Divine favour of the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, St. Paul was not remiss in teaching and practising Holy Communion, as we see from St. Luke's words speaking of it as a custom, when he was at Troas with St. Paul: "And on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread" (Acts xx. 7). Picture St. Paul at these meetings for the "breaking of bread," with His Body in his hands, Who had mercifully struck him down, and cried from heaven, "I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest," and here in loving reconciliation was giving him Himself. Nourished with this Divine food, we need not wonder at the ardour of Paul to preach Christ, to labour for Him, to face perils and death to make up for the past!

Is it not perfectly clear from his own words that St. Paul, inspired by God, held the same faith about the Holy Eucharist as did the rest of the Apostles from the words of their Divine Master at the Last

Supper? Anyone, therefore, who rejects the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar, undoubtedly is rejecting as well his Bible, the inspired Word of God.

St. Paul foreknew how many would object to this doctrine, as the Jews had when our Blessed Lord had said: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world" (John vi. 52). "After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (*ibid.* 67). St. Paul foreknew it, and warns the Church accordingly, so that those who deny this Holy Sacrament see themselves foreshadowed. "Remember your prelates, who have spoken the word of God to you: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation—Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever. Be not led away with various and strange doctrines" (Heb. xiii. 7, 9). Moreover, the Apostle warns us to beware of associating with those who hold not the right faith, saying: "And we charge you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking . . . not according to the traditions which they have received from us" (2 Thess. iii. 6).

How many Catholics, especially amongst the young, have lost their faith through being ill-instructed; through human respect, because they could not answer objections; through frailty, because it is easier to give up Holy Communion, and the strict, careful life we must endeavour to live to be fit for it. Let such take courage and be not ashamed of the Gospel. St. Paul holds out his hand to strengthen them and guide them: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess. ii. 14).

Forgiveness of Injuries

ST. JOHN GUALBERTUS

JULY 12, 1073

"Forgive thy neighbour if he hath hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven thee when thou prayest."—ECCLUS. xxviii. 2.

To forgive is a real conquest of our heart. It is so natural, so human to take offence, to resent a wrong, to repay injury with injury, that it is only by the grace of God, the reward of earnest prayer, that we can bring ourselves to follow the example of our Blessed Lord and to obey His words: "If you will forgive men their offences, your Heavenly Father will forgive you your offences" (Matt. vi. 14).

A perfect example of this forgiveness we see in the death of the Venerable Juvenal Ancina, a Bishop and friend of SS. Philip Neri and Francis of Sales. He had only been consecrated one year, in which time he had transformed his diocese, when one, whom he had reproved, poisoned him. He knew his murderer, and could have proved his guilt, but as he lay dying, he forbade his name to be mentioned, and made the priests around him promise to take no steps to discover the author of the crime, and praying for his murderer, he died.

This is a noble and saintly example, but how much

more difficult it would have been thus to forgive if, instead of being a holy Bishop, he had been a young man of the world, with resentment in his heart, and bound by the tyranny of so-called honour to revenge a wrong, and fearing the verdict of the world more than breaking the commandments of God. This was the state of John Gualbertus, a young Florentine noble, whose brother had recently been slain. The law took no notice of duels, or even of murders, if the perpetrator was a man of position. It naturally fell, then, to John to avenge his brother's death. His father had bound him by oath to do so, and his own heart and his mistaken notion of honour urged him on his wicked course.

The occasion presented itself. Descending the hill by the Benedictine monastery of San Miniato, which looks down upon Florence, John, with attendants around him, came face to face with his enemy. On the narrow path of the steep hill-side there was no chance of escape, and John, drawing his sword, in hot anger made for his adversary. The wretched man was unarmed, and falling on his knees, with arms outstretched, begged for mercy. It was Good Friday, and he conjured Gualbertus by the sacred Passion of the Lord, who had died that day for sinners, to spare him. Good Friday—the appealing to our Lord's Passion, and the arms outstretched like Christ upon the Cross—all arrested the arm of him who had murder in his heart. The grace of God came as an echo of those dying words of the Saviour, "Father, forgive them," and John's conscience was struck. Throwing away his sword, he mercifully took his enemy by the hand and raised him up, and the blessed words of forgiveness rose to his lips. "I can refuse nothing in

the name of Jesus Crucified, and on this day on which He died. I give you your life and my friendship. May God forgive me my sinfulness." This perfect act of forgiveness had been described by St. Paul: "Be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, as God hath forgiven you in Christ" (Eph. iv. 32).

John betook himself to the monastery church, and there, before the great Crucifix, he poured out his soul to God. Most fervently he thanked his good Saviour for being spared the actual sin of murder, and for the grace that had been granted to him to forgive. And as he prayed the figure on the Crucifix bowed its head to thank him. For hundreds of years that miraculous Crucifix was venerated, and many a sinful heart poured forth its sorrow and made good resolutions at its feet. "Forgive thy neighbour if he hath hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven thee when thou prayest."

But what had blessed John done? He was not blind to that. In the eyes of his world he had dishonoured himself. His name would be a byword amongst the gallants of Florence. Shame would break his father's heart, and home would be no home to him again. Still more grace was showered down upon the sinner that had forgiven. With St. Peter he vowed to leave all things and follow Christ! He sought the Abbot, and humbly confessing all that he had meant to do, sought admission to the monastery. The Abbot feared to grant his request, for he knew well what pressure would be brought to bear upon him by his father. He judged rightly, for when he had heard of what had happened, the elder Gualbertus hastened to San Miniato, and an angry and violent scene ensued. Blessed John was firm. He had given himself to

Christ, and the Crucifix had signified approval and acceptance. Fidelity and constancy triumphed: he would not quit the monastery. Cutting off his own hair, which was worn long by noblemen in those days, and borrowing a Benedictine habit, he made the church his home. Another day, when his father came once more, the Abbot took him to the church, and there himself unnoticed, he beheld his son at prayer. The sight of him as a monk, his demeanour of ardent piety, melted his father's obduracy. There was a reconciliation, and free permission granted him to leave the world and give himself to a religious life.

We need not follow him through the long and edifying years of his life, the model of all in every devout exercise and strictest observance; nor tell of his reform, and how he founded the Abbey of Valombrosa; nor how he became friend and counsellor to Popes, and renowned for his miracles far and wide.

One thing suffices for us, and that is to picture the old Saint, as year after year brought Good Friday once again, recalling that eventful day, humbly thanking God for His mercy and His graces, and begging for other poor sinners that they may learn to forgive. That one act of forgiveness was the foundation on which the glorious fabric of his sanctity was raised. "Forgive thy neighbour if he hath hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven thee when thou prayest."

A Holy Death

ST. CAMILLUS DE LELLIS

JULY 14, 1614

"Fear not, for I have received thee, and called thee by thy name: thou art Mine."—ISA. xliii. 1.

WHAT greater charity can there be than to succour the dying—to soothe the anguish both of body and soul when the last hour of mortal life is drawing nigh? The most important hour of our whole life is the hour of our departure. On that hour eternity depends. If our soul is in the grace of God when it bids farewell to our worn-out body, then all is well. But the difficulties, the dangers of that last hour! Our bodies weak and exhausted, our minds obscured, benumbed, paralyzed, as it were—how can we pray and be contrite, and have full confidence in the mercy of God? Oftentimes our souls are enveloped in the midst of a stupor, or else they are terrified at the vision of the past—of negligence and infidelities to grace, or of sin only half repented of. It is the hour of danger too, for the devil knows that he only has a short time, and he endeavours by his evil suggestions and temptations to make our souls doubt the mercy of God, and to harass them so that prayer is wellnigh impossible. Then, indeed, shall we need all the graces and safeguards that God in His mercy has

provided for the dying. Happy, indeed, then shall we be if our past piety and the ministrations of the Church give us trust in the goodness of God, that it is He Himself who is only calling His child home to its Father, saying: "Fear not, for I have received thee, and called thee by thy name: thou art Mine."

To succour the dying was the life-work of St. Camillus de Lellis, styled by Pope Leo XIII. the Patron of a Holy Death. And how did Almighty God prepare him for this holy and angelic vocation? He had to be a man whose heart for years had sounded the depths of compunction, and which was overflowing with compassion. Yes, it was out of his own heart's humble contrition that he could infuse sorrow into the hearts of dying sinners, and because he had suffered so much himself, that his compassion never wearied in tending incurables and the plague-stricken.

Where do we find our Saint in his youthful days? Not in the seminary or cloister, nor frequenting the altar-rails, but soldiering in camp, living riotously, passing the night in gambling, to which he was so addicted that by it he reduced himself to beggary. Ah, then he had time to listen to the voice of grace! Sheer starvation drove him to work at the building of a Capuchin monastery. It pleased God that his heart should be touched by one of the Fathers, whose entreaties, prayers, and holy example worked the thorough conversion of this undisciplined and sinful heart. Camillus was in such earnest that at two different monasteries he begged to be allowed to be a lay-brother, for he was quite unlettered. After a trial he was twice dismissed on account of an incurable disease. Thus was his patience tried, and in suffering he learned from his crucified Master compassion for

those afflicted like himself. But God's grace was leading him surely and safely on.

He journeyed to Rome, and was there admitted to the Hospital of St. James for Incurables. There, though ailing himself, he helped to attend the bed-ridden for four years. St. Philip Neri became his confessor and director—how he would guide him in the ways of loving God and in tender charity to the poor afflicted ones around him. St. Camillus, through seeing so many die, realized that it was not paid and lay nurses alone that were needed, but religious men, who, whilst tending the body, should think far more of the need of the soul. That he might be more useful to the dying he determined to become a priest, and at thirty-two years of age he was not deterred by jeers and sarcasm from learning sufficient Latin and theology to be ordained. He founded, with a few devout friends, the society of the " Servants of the Sick," who took the vow of serving even the plague-stricken.

His infirmities increased, and for thirty years painful maladies, which he lovingly called " the mercies of the Lord," which were enough to keep him to his bed, only inflamed his fervour in that one object of his life—to prepare the dying for a good death. St. Philip and others saw an Angel whispering to him as he bent over the dying, so that he knew the state of their souls, helped them to confess, to be thoroughly contrite, and to be resigned to the blessed Will of God. And when he could no longer walk, by reason of the dreadful sores in his legs and feet, he was often seen rising from his bed during the night, and crawling on his hands and knees to the bedside of some poor patient racked with pain, and consoling him, praying with him through the weary hours, till at last he was at peace.

In his humility St. Camillus often said: "Would to God that in the hour of my death one sigh or one blessing of these poor creatures may fall upon me." And his prayer was heard indeed. For over thirty years this life continued, and his work was blessed. His few companions had developed into a Religious Order. Houses had been established in many of the cities of Italy, and even as far off as Hungary. In years of famine and plague his brethren were as Angels amongst the poor and the dying. He never allowed himself to think of the good he had done: his memory dwelt on the wasted years of his youth, and, looking forward, he only saw how many more dying sinners needed succour.

Witness his humility when he received the last Sacraments. Thus he prayed: "O Lord, I confess I am the most wretched of sinners, most undeserving of Thy favour; but save me by Thy infinite goodness. My hope is in Thy Divine mercy, through Thy precious Blood." His faculties were clear to the end, and he died as the priest, and he recited these words: "May Jesus Christ appear with a benign and welcoming countenance." Thus our Blessed Lord kept His promise to him, for Camillus, years before, had heard the Crucifix address him: "I will aid thee and be with thee—fear not."

By remembrance of St. Camillus and devotion to him now in life we can secure his compassionate assistance at the hour of our death. Let us endeavour, then, to make sure of that consolation: he cannot refuse us, for he loved, yea venerated, the dying for the sake of Him Who had died for their redemption.

Our Brethren—the Poor

ST. VINCENT OF PAUL

JULY 19, 1660

"As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."—MATT. xxv. 40.

GOD'S great works have small and humble beginnings. The redemption of the world was first heard of in the Virgin's house at Nazareth; the Saviour's first throne was the manger at Bethlehem. And so it is of Christ's servants.

We have not to be content to learn of the labours, achievements, and wonders they have done, but we should trace these back to their humble beginnings, and thus learn to love and serve God. There is a Saint whose name has been a household word in every country these last two hundred and fifty years. The Lazarists, or Fathers of the Mission, are his children. That congregation of priests, whose aims were the conversion and instruction of the poor and the ignorant, who were the pioneers of missions and retreats, and the trainers of the clergy in the seminaries; the Dames of the Cross, those ladies who gave themselves to the care and teaching of poor girls in days when schools were only thought of for children of the rich, they call him Father too. Hospitals for the sick and for foundlings which covered Western Europe owe

their origin to him. The care of prisoners, galley-slaves, and utter outcasts was taken over by himself and his disciples. That glorious Order of Nuns, the Sisters of Charity, who have been counted in their thousands for the last two centuries, whose garb is known in every haunt of poverty, are his children likewise. And that other well-known band of brothers, Brothers of the Poor, who, sinking their social position, seek out the poor, the sick, the miserable—they, too, are his sons. One and all of these claim as their Father and their founder St. Vincent of Paul! To have started one such Order or undertaking would have won a halo of glory for an arduous and saintly life. But to be the Father of them all! How could one man have found the time, the means, the strength of attempting and doing so much?

Let us learn the ways of God. Let us bless and adore the Divine workings in the soul of Vincent, that prepared him to dare, to attempt, to achieve so much for his Master. Born in the South of France in 1576, Vincent's first work was to tend his father's cattle humbly and obediently. But his parents noting his pious disposition, at grave inconvenience procured him some schooling. A wealthy benefactor then came to their assistance, and the happy day arrived for the young Saint to go to college and study for the priesthood. Piety and cleverness combined enabled him in time to become a professor. But his yearning was for pastoral work. Good and holy and learned as he was, there was another school he had to go to. His Divine Master would have him still more perfect, would have him eminently fitted for the work He destined him to do. It was in the school of suffering that he had to learn compassion.

And this is how it happened. Vincent was left a small legacy, and he was obliged to go to Marseilles to claim it, and for this purpose he embarked at Toulon. That short voyage was destined never to be accomplished. Hardly were they started when pirates attacked them, the captain slain, and Vincent, amongst the rest, wounded. Their captors carried them off to Morocco, and there they were all sold as slaves! Picture for a moment the distress, the anguish of the ardent young priest at this affliction. The labour, the stripes, the starvation of slavery, the horror and agony of mingling with such wickedness—but worse than all, no morning's Mass! Had God forgotten him, or cast him aside as useless?

Several times he was resold to different masters, and at length to a renegade Christian, whose cruelty, born of hatred to religion, was excessive. Vincent bore all patiently and without resentment, and beguiled his weary spirit singing at his work hymns and psalms, and above all the *Salve Regina*. Who ever sang with such devotion those words: "In this vale of tears, after this our exile"! One of the three wives of this renegade loved to listen to poor St. Vincent, and talked to him of his religion, once the religion of her husband, though she herself was a Moor. Pity filled her heart, and reverence for the doctrine that Vincent taught her. And God made her the instrument to reclaim the renegade. St. Vincent's prayers were answered, the apostate repented, planned to escape back to France, and after two years' training in this hard school of suffering Vincent found himself free once again. His first care was to make a pilgrimage to Rome in thanksgiving, and to place his convert where he would be safe; he joined a brotherhood that served the hospitals.

The sight and experience of so much suffering—the galley-slaves, the fallen, the outcasts of Marseilles, the wild, untutored soldiers and sailors he had met—had filled our Saint's soul with inexpressible longings to bring help and remedy to the needy, afflicted, and the wicked. His charity was such that once he actually exchanged with a galley-slave so that the poor man might return to his wife and children, and Vincent in shackles took his place. A sore that never healed and made him somewhat lame testified to this act of charity all his long life.

His submission to the Will of God, his patience in sufferings, obtained for him graces that influenced all with whom he came in contact. His yearnings were to work amongst the poor, but the wealthy and noble sought him out. These he converted to his views, and they supplied the means to build hospitals and to send missioners to reclaim poor sinners. Pressed by the King to come and reside at Court, he only went when necessity compelled him, and each visit was marked by some new foundation to minister to his beloved poor. He was confessor to the King and Queen, and Louis XIII., whom he attended, died in his arms.

Through their influence he became Chaplain-General of the Army, Navy, and prisoners of France. What a field of labour for the Fathers of the Mission whom he had instituted! Each year saw some new movement started for the welfare of the poor and the salvation of souls. But though he was the master-mind of all these achievements, in daily life he was the humblest of priests, seeking out the sick, the friendless, and the afflicted. Even in his old age he would seek out poor children in the purlieus of Paris, and one night, carrying home a tiny foundling he had discovered, he was set

upon by robbers, who thought it must be a treasure that he carried wrapped in his cloak. He peacefully showed them the treasure, and those wild men were moved, begged his pardon, and gave him their money for the poor. He often used to say: "Look at the poor; turn the medal, and you will see Jesus Christ."

His spirit, that urged him on to such unresting labours, which he has handed down to his children—nuns, laymen, and priests—was to love the poor, to see Jesus Christ in them, to realize that "what you do to the least of My brethren" you do to Christ. He would have the well-to-do work good in the sight of others, and thus teach charity and spread it. Visit the poor, help them, console them, be a brother to them—that is what St. Vincent taught. No other virtue so quickly and efficaciously unites us to our Blessed Lord as charity in actual word and deed. Remember St. Vincent's words: "Those who love the poor in life shall have no fear of death."

The Model of Repentance

ST. MARY MAGDALEN

July 22

"Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."—Luke vii. 47.

The episode of Magdalen's conversion is so well known that were it not for our Blessed Lord's words it might be passed over in silence. But He has said: "Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also that she has done shall be told for a memory of her" (Matt. xxvi. 13).

To most souls heaven would be closed if it were not for repentance. Therefore we cannot learn how to repent too well, or remember it too often. And in recalling the memory of blessed Mary Magdalen we are obeying our Blessed Lord.

The Gospel describes to us the scene of her repentance: "And He went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box full of ointment; and standing behind at His feet, the began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped shem with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke vii. 36-38). We know not what had touched that sinner's heart, whether some word of our Blessed Lord's that

she had heard, or some kindly deed of mercy that He had wrought; but certain it is that God's grace led her and emboldened her to do the deed which was to be famous for all time. She knew well how the Pharisees would regard her, her presence was pollution; but she heeded them not. Mary was bringing her sinful past to lay it at her Saviour's feet. This was her opportunity. Love knows no delays. She bravely enters; tears were her only speech. And He Who reads the thoughts of every heart understood her. Heart spoke to heart. Mary confessed her sinfulness; Christ spoke words of mercy and forgiveness. Blessed Magdalen, model of all penitent sinners! The first to confess Jesus Christ before men and in the presence of His enemies. Regardless of her own shame, of the scorn of those around, her only thought was the sins of the past and the love of Him in Whom she trusted for forgiveness. She consecrated to Him her heart, her soul, her life, all she is, all she has, and He cleanses and heals her soul, and fills it with His love.

Let us all humbly remember this: Magdalen never fell again; dangerous occasions knew her no more; she was dead to all her associates of evil. And we, how often have we had to seek that Saviour's feet with our oft-told tale of sinfulness!

The proof of Magdalen's constancy and courage we find on Calvary. Alas! on that Good Friday good people doubted our Saviour, friends had grown timid and hid themselves, the Apostles had deserted Him; but Magdalen we find by the Cross. Who shall tell the wonders of God's mercy? By the Cross there was room, indeed, for His Blessed Mother, the Immaculate One, for faithful John, and—to encourage us all, to fill us with hope—for the penitent sinner Magdalen! She was near His feet again, she would weep over them

and kiss them broken-heartedly once more. For, oh, how she realized that all His sufferings were the work of sin! Only by devotion to the Sufferings and Death of their Redeemer can penitents find strength to persevere.

Let us now behold the reward of Magdalen's constancy at the Cross. Her Saviour was dead and buried. The poor dismayed disciples in their grief had forgotten the word of their Divine Master that He would rise again. But it was Magdalen, with Joanna and Mary of James, that went very early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus, and they found the tomb open and empty; and the Angels said to them: "He is risen; He is not here." Magdalen was the herald of the joyful news to the Apostles. Peter and John came and searched, and went away. But Magdalen, returning, stayed on, standing near the tomb, weeping. Her sorrowing perseverance won for her that glorious privilege of being the first to behold the risen Jesus. St. Mark says: "He appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom He had cast seven devils" (xvi. 9). This pre-eminence of grace, this distinguishing favour of our Blessed Saviour, was the recompense of her ardent love. She had sought Him dead, she had found Him living.

This privilege was for our sakes too. Magdalen had stood there weeping, the representative of all devout penitents, and it was to encourage them, to make them trust in God's mercy, that she was so privileged and consoled. "The Lord is sweet to all, and His mercies are above all His works" (Ps. cxliv. 9).

It is an ancient tradition of the Church that after Pentecost, when the Apostles filled with the Holy Spirit began to preach Christ Crucified, Magdalen, Lazarus, Martha, and others, living and striking witnesses to Christ, were banished. Marseilles is mentioned as

their landing-place, of which city Lazarus became Bishop. Magdalen retired to a lonely and secluded spot, and there spent thirty years in solitude. If any Saint has ever prayed for sinners—and they all have—and laboured for them and even died for them, surely blessed Magdalen, the penitent, would be the one to pray for all the fallen to rise up and seek their Saviour, to quit sin, to despise the world, and boldly stand by the Cross of their salvation. Let us hope that in those long years, waiting for heaven, that she prayed for us. We can be quite sure that she would not disdain us, for we see her humility when she came to die. The legend is that Angels transported her from her hermitage, when death drew nigh, to St. Maximin, one of Christ's disciples, for the Holy Viaticum. Raised in the air, her face resplendent, she appeared to him, and seeing the Bishop amazed and afraid, she said: "I am Magdalen, the sinner!" Blessed humility, we love thee for it, for it gives us hope and surety of thy kind solicitude for sinners! And fortified by the Body of the Lord—the Lord she had loved so faithfully—her soul was borne to heaven, there to behold Him and glory in His Presence.

The tomb of the holy penitent was for long a celebrated place of pilgrimage. Not far from Marseilles, at St. Maximin's, amongst others the Crusaders loved to call and beg a blessing on their enterprise. The Kings of France adorned her tomb, and built there a sumptuous church, and in one century no less than eight Popes knelt and prayed before her relics. But greater than her tomb are all the praises that have been sounded in her honour. From the earliest time, from Irenæus and Origen, Saints have loved to tell of Magdalen the sinner, and when they did so, they only obeyed their Master: "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached . . . this shall be told in memory of her."

Atonement for Sin

ST. AFRA, MARTYR

AUGUST 5, 304

"I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance."—LUKE v. 32.

IT is at the thought of death and at the approach of death that oftentimes the fear of God's judgment takes possession of men's souls. The fear of God is good for us, but not to the exclusion of a trustfulness in His mercy. We must remember, and the more sinful we may have been the more we must cherish the thought: "The Lord is gracious and merciful; patient and plenteous in mercy. The Lord is sweet to all; and His tender mercies are above all His works" (Ps. cxliv. 8, 9).

Anything, therefore, that teaches us this blessed trust in God, that shows to what heights of sanctity a humble penitent can reach by reason of this trustfulness, is well worth considering. Some day we may need very great confidence in God's mercy to prevent us from being overwhelmed with dread at the memory of our sins.

At such a time the remembrance of St. Afra the martyr will bring us comfort and consolation. She is the model of enduring contrition, of willingness to make atonement for her sins, of confidence in God,

About the year 300, at Augsburg, though some Christians might be found, most of the inhabitants were pagans. Vice was rampant, and conspicuous even amongst the worst was Afra, the priestess of Venus. Yet she was one of whom our dear Lord's words had been spoken: " I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance."

St. Narcissus, a fugitive Bishop hiding for a time from the persecutors, happened to seek refuge at Augsburg. Here God's providence led him to meet with and convert Afra and her mother and sisters. We know not the details, but the results show manifestly how deeply he had instructed them, how thoroughly they had cast off their sinfulness, how steadfastly they clung to their religion.

The dissolute young men of the city soon missed Afra at their wicked orgies, and her retired and hidden life caused wonder and gossip; and at last the fateful word was whispered that she had become a Christian. The devil soon instigated informers for the sake of the reward to denounce her to Gaius, the Judge. He knew of her ill-fame, and imagined that she must be only pretending to be a Christian. Contemptuously he ordered her to sacrifice to the gods, for to live was better than to die in torments. Afra replied: " I was a great sinner before I knew God; but I will not commit new crimes by doing what you command me. I every day confess my sins, and I desire that this body, in which I have sinned, may be purified and sacrificed to Him in torments. The Lord Jesus Christ hath said that He came down from heaven to save sinners. The Gospel testifies that an abandoned woman washed His feet with her tears, and obtained pardon, and that He never rejected sinners. I desire to die, and thus atone for my sins.

The proceeds of my wickedness I have distributed to the poor, and even they would not accept my money until they knew that I had abandoned my wickedness, and asked them to pray for my soul."

Baffled by her constancy and the dignity of her answers, Gaius at last condemned her to be burned alive for thus professing Jesus Christ. A little island midway in the River Lech, that skirts the city, was the place of sacrifice. The banks were crowded with spectators—a few weeping friends amidst a multitude of pagans. And there, the fire enkindled around her, blessed Afra's voice was raised in prayer. Her sorrow for the past filled her heart even then, but she gloried that she could make atonement to God, and her confidence in His mercy was supreme. "O Lord Jesus Christ," she cried, "Thou comest to call sinners to repentance, receive in this hour the atonement of my sufferings, and save me by this fire from the fire eternal. To Thee I offer myself in sacrifice. Receive me as a victim for Thy Name's sake." Thus did Afra repent, amend, trust in God, and receive from Him the crown of a glorious martyrdom. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9).

That night her mother, sisters, and some friends rowed over to the island, and found her body entire. Preparing with all reverence and devotion for its entombment, guards came upon them, for word had been taken secretly to the Governor, and at his orders, without any trial, if they refused to abjure their Faith, they had to be put to death forthwith. The fire was enkindled once again, and mother and sisters, once companions in Afra's sinfulness, boldly persevered in confessing Christ, and their souls winged their flight

to be her companions for ever amidst the blessed Martyrs of God.

To this day St. Afra is the patroness of Augsburg, and a glorious church stands there—SS. Ulrich and Afra—still bearing witness to her atonement and trust in God. She had sinned in ignorance, whilst still a pagan; how often have we fallen into sin, we who are Catholics, instructed and so favoured by God! And can our repentances be compared to hers? A few short prayers, a hurried confession, and we think that we have made worthy atonement. But blessed Afra once converted gave away all her possessions, and humbled herself in doing so too; kept her sinful past always before her mind, and when the occasion offered, glorified God that she could make atonement and suffer for Him Who in His mercy had suffered for her. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. l. 19).

Devotion to the Mother of God

ST. STANISLAUS OF KOTSKA

DIED AUGUST 15, 1586

"I love them that love Me."—PROV. viii. 17.

THERE is no better safeguard for the young in their manifold temptations and dangerous occasions, than a constant devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. To be of real service it must be constant. A daily prayer seeking her help and solicitude. Then when danger suddenly arises, the prayer as quickly springs to the lips supplicating our Lady's help. These occasions must need be frequent in the lives of everyone. The way to heaven is beset with snares. In this world, and especially in these days, good and bad, the religious-minded and the scoffer are thrown together, and we have to walk warily lest we be deceived or trapped into sin. And a living, loving devotedness to Mary is our best defence.

An example in proof of this—how our Blessed Mother guides and guards those who devoutly trust in her and perseveringly invoke her—we find in the life of St. Stanislaus of Kotska. Even as a child he was especially devout to the Holy Rosary. When he was thirteen he and his brother were sent to Vienna to pursue their studies, and there, unfortunately, found arrangements

made for them to board at the house of a Lutheran. Evil example, human respect, and fear of boldly acting up to his religion, very soon produced evil effects in his brother. And, alas! shortly afterwards Stanislaus fell ill, and daily growing worse, he anxiously prayed that a priest should be sent for. His brother was ashamed, and put him off; and when at length the household heard of his wish, the master absolutely refused to allow a priest to visit him.

How many young people, alas! have been in the same straits: servants in a non-Catholic house, apprentices, farm labourers, strangers in a town—how many have passed sad and sleepless nights, fearing to die, their poor souls indeed friendless and alone! What is left to them, then, if they have not learned a good habit of prayerfulness, of turning with confidence to Jesus and Mary? We can picture to ourselves the misery of the poor blessed Stanislaus in such surroundings. His brother indifferent, perhaps sneering, the other inmates of the house callous and cruel. Then it was that his devotion to his Holy Mother came to the rescue. His prayers were so earnest, his longing for the Holy Viaticum so intense, that as he lay there alone, dying, as he thought, St. Barbara, with two Angels, appeared to him, and brought him Holy Communion. Afterwards our Blessed Lady and the Divine Infant likewise appeared. The Infant embraced him, but our Lady told him that he would not die then, but that he must give himself wholly to God, and be prepared to suffer more for Him.

After his recovery he made known to his brother his desire to consecrate himself to God's service. He was rudely told to go where he liked, and do what he liked. He set off alone to walk to Augsburg, and thence to

Dilingen. His brother, perhaps, fearing his father's anger when he should hear of what had happened, procured a carriage, and with some friends followed him in pursuit. And here again the boy was miraculously protected, for he himself saw the carriage and recognized his brother, but their eyes were sealed by God so that they saw him not. As he resumed his journey next day he wished to receive Holy Communion, and by mistake entered a Lutheran church, but an Angel brought him the Blessed Sacrament to fortify him. Welcomed at Dilingen by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, the Superior, blessed Peter Canisius, thought it wiser to send him to Rome to be safe from the anger and menaces of his father.

At Rome he was received by St. Francis Borgia. How pleased that great Saint must have been to welcome such a youth to the noviciate! And what a transport of joy it must have been for Stanislaus to find himself in the Holy City, to visit the basilicas, to pray at the shrines, to conjure up before his mind the Saints who have lived and died there, so that they still seemed to him to people the streets and fill the churches. Above all he loved to visit St. Mary Major, and to pray before his Mother's picture, the Madonna of St. Luke. Her name was always on his lips, the thought of her always in his heart. Noticing how his face glowed after such visits, someone said: "You seem to love our Lady very much." "Ah yes," he replied, "for is not the Mother of God my Mother too?" From his room in his Jesuit home at St. Andrea, he morning and night turned to her church on the Esquiline and asked her blessing.

"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time, for his soul pleased God: therefore He

hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities. . . . The grace of God and His mercy is with His Saints" (Wisd. iv. 13-15).

Only eighteen, and that brief life was over! Indeed, "his soul pleased God." At the beginning of August Stanislaus spoke of dying, but as he was in his usual health, he was checked for so doing by one of the fathers. But still the thought and the longing dwelt in his soul. About the tenth of the month he prayed to St. Lawrence that he might die on the Assumption of our Blessed Lady. His prayer was heard, for he sickened and took to his bed. His prayers now were incessant, his Mother's name ever on his lips. And as he grew feebler, someone tried to take his rosary from his grasp as he could not recite it any longer, but his fingers closed on it, and he whispered: "At least, I can feel it." The last Sacraments were administered; he grew weaker and weaker, yet his eyes were bright with the look of expectation! The day of the Assumption was here, and Stanislaus was confident that he would spend that day with her in heaven. At last the vision lit up the sick chamber; our Lady had come for him! Oh, the rapture of that soul when it realized "the Mother of God is my Mother too"!

Self-Renunciation

ST. BERNARD

August 20, 1153

"And every one that hath left house or brethren . . . for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess everlasting life."—Matt. xix. 29.

These loving words of our Blessed Lord were spoken in reply to St. Peter's generous outburst: "Lord, we have left all things, and have followed Thee." What countless Saints, both men and women, have been encouraged to imitate St. Peter in leaving all things and following Christ by the blessed promise of His Divine Master. What we all need is generosity to our Lord, and courage to make a venture, "the venture of faith."

In a matter like this an example inspires far more than argument or proof. And what better example could be found than that of St. Bernard, the great Cistercian Abbot? He was brought up differently than his brothers, who were intended for the army, like their father, whereas Bernard had been carefully educated by the canons of Chatillon. There his genius and application were only surpassed by his piety, charity, and love of retirement. At the age of nineteen, having to face the world after his mother's death, though enjoying position, friends, and everything that

was desirable, the fear of God took possession of his heart, and he realized the truth that only one thing was necessary, the salvation of his soul. He took the resolve to become a monk, and join the austere and holy community at Citeaux. His resolution to leave all things—home, brethren, father—was quickly and wonderfully blessed by God. In response to the bitter opposition raised against his intention, Bernard spoke so lovingly of God, so earnestly of making sure of heaven, that instead of losing brethren and friends, he gained them. His uncle, brothers, save the youngest, a mere boy, and many friends, joined him, and having made a retreat, a band of thirty presented themselves to St. Stephen, the Abbot of Citeaux.

Later on, when St. Bernard himself was Abbot of Clairvaux, his father and his youngest brother Nivard joined him, and took their vows. All the family had now left all things to follow Christ save his sister. She came once, richly attired, to visit him, but he refused to see her. She returned in humble garments, and sent the message: "Christ died for sinners; let my brother come and order, and I will do it." That interview achieved the conquest of her soul. She became a Benedictine nun, an abbess, and a Saint, Humbeline by name.

He had renounced brethren, and he had found more; he had renounced a home, and now he was to be enriched with many. Such members flocked to Citeaux that other monasteries had to be established, not in one kingdom alone, but multiplying and still multiplying—the hundredfold bestowed on Bernard. He had renounced the world to become unknown for the love of Christ; and behold him the great ornament of his age, the man to whom every eye was turned for

guidance and help, whether in schisms, dissensions amongst princes, or organizing a Crusade; the counsellor and friend of Popes—yea, the spiritual father of a Pope—for one of his own monks wore the triple crown as Eugenius III.

Amidst all this, the works that he wrote, that earned for him the title of "Doctor of the Church," the innumerable sermons that he preached, so many of which have been preserved to us, are making new friends and disciples for him yet. When necessity arose, miracles crowned his holy life, and he became the wonder of his time. At Milan, where he cured great numbers of the sick, there was a lady possessed by the evil spirit, which no prayers or exorcisms could drive away. St. Bernard had her brought into the ancient church of St. Ambrose, and then he offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and after the *Pater Noster* he descended from the altar with the Host and paten in his hands, and, approaching the woman, held the Blessed Sacrament over her head, and cried out: "Wicked spirit, here is thy Judge, the Almighty power, resist Him if thou canst. Here is the Body, born of the Virgin Mary, that was nailed to the Cross. In the power of His Majesty, malignant spirit, I command thee to depart." Before the crowded and excited congregation the woman was cured, and Bernard returned to the altar.

Another miracle shows his wonderful faith. He was preaching against the Albigenses. These heretics had been deluded; he saw arguments were lost on them, and he remembered that miracles were meant for unbelievers. So he challenged their leaders: "Bring hither the infirm and the diseased; you bless bread and give it them, and I will, and see which bread will

cure them. By the power of that bread let us test which is the right religion." What faith had that blessed man! He did not say they had to eat with faith or hope; simply eat his bread, and they should be cured. From everywhere crowds of the infirm were brought. The heretics dare not accept his challenge, but the poor invalids received and ate the blessed bread, and all—great numbers there were—were cured and multitudes converted.

The text adds: "And shall possess everlasting life." Let us see how St. Bernard's faith claimed that. Once in a dangerous illness, being nigh to death, he had a vision of the Tribunal of God. The devil grievously accused him, but to the charges Bernard made reply: "I confess myself most unworthy of the glory of heaven, and that I can never obtain it by my own merits. But my Lord possesses everlasting life on a double title. First He inherits it as the Son of God, and, secondly, He purchased it by His Passion and Death. The second title He hath mercifully bestowed on me, therefore I trust in God's mercy." The enemy of souls was routed, and our Blessed Lady and St. Benedict appeared to him, soothed his sufferings, and he was restored to health.

Perhaps to us it is most consoling to remember this great Saint as the humble, devout client of Mary. It elevates devotion to our Lady above the scoffs and sneers of the worldly-minded to find such an intellect and such a Saint childlike in his devotion to the Mother of God. We would then rather picture him in ecstasy in the choir at Spires, singing when the rest had finished the *Salve Regina:* "O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!"—words that since then have been added to give a charm to that sweet canticle of Mary.

Or, again, we would rather picture him humbly kneeling before her statue murmuring that prayer which we all know by his name : " Remember, O most Holy Virgin Mary." On one occasion as he thus knelt, the statue of our Lady spoke to him, and said, " Bernard, take into your arms my Son, the Redeemer of the world " ; and the Infant embraced him. At the moment of his death we are told that our Blessed Lady appeared to him. He had found a heavenly Mother, indeed, and as he died how he would behold in glorious reality that, having renounced all things for Christ's sake, he was indeed receiving the " hundredfold . . . and life everlasting " !

Conversion of Heart

ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

August 28, 430

"Arise, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee."—Eph. v. 14.

The example of the great St. Augustine speaks to every heart. For nearly one thousand five hundred years his figure has stood out most prominently amongst the chief defenders of the faith, a model of the strenuous life of a great Churchman, and yet we are privileged by his humble confession of himself to see the interior workings of his heart.

If example ever should have power of moving, it should be the example of Augustine. It is not a mere fanciful picture drawn by some devout admirer; it is the laying bare to every eye of that thoroughly human heart, which had known sin, which had battled against the calls of grace, which was finally overcome and won to God by a mother's prayers and the good example of others.

Gifted with the keenest of intellects and all the versatile accomplishments with which education and training could adorn him, his pride of intellect and glory of success caused him to fall into heresy and the sins of the flesh. For eight or nine years he turned his back on Almighty God. And yet that patient, long-

suffering God did not forsake him. The continued prayers and tears of his mother, St. Monica; a dangerous illness, during which his soul was compelled to think of God; his seeking a residence at Milan, where he had the blessing of meeting St. Ambrose and other holy men—were all graces that the mercy of God showered down upon him to bring him to repentance.

Then came that struggle, that war within himself, that he so touchingly reveals to us, in which we see our own waywardness, our own cowardice, our own half-heartedness, our own unwillingness to quit sin, its pleasures and memories, for God's dear sake. As we read we are interested in his battle, absorbed in his description of the conflict, and with a sigh of relief we thank God when he emerges victorious. Then our prayerful hopes ascend to heaven that we may imitate him and fight the good fight, and give ourselves wholly to God as he did.

He tells us of the conflict: "I sighed and longed to be delivered, but was kept bound by my own iron will. The enemy held my will, and of it he had made a chain, with which he had fettered me fast. . . . I had no excuse, as I pretended formerly when I delayed to serve Thee, because I had not yet certainly discarded Thy truth; for now I knew it, yet I was still fettered. I had nothing now to say to Thee, when Thou saidst to me, 'Arise, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee.'"

And how did the end come? How was he aroused from his fatal lethargy? A friend chanced one day to mention the life of St. Antony the Hermit. Neither Augustine nor his friend Alipius had heard of him. They listened with amazement to the account of the thousands of solitaries in the desert, to the well-

attested miracles of St. Antony, and that even close to them, outside the walls of Milan, there were monks living holy, penitential lives under the guidance of the Bishop, St. Ambrose. All this sunk into the heart of Augustine, and he was shamed and grieved at his own cowardice. "What are we doing," he said to Alipius, "who thus suffer the unlearned to rise up and seize heaven by force, whilst we, with all our knowledge, remain behind cowardly and heartless, and wallow still in the mire? What, because they have outstripped us and are gone before, are we ashamed to follow them?" He tells us again: "I was now enraged at myself that I did not courageously at once resolve on what my reason convinced me to be so good and necessary. I would, and I would not! I shook my chain with which I was fettered, but could not be released from it. Thou, O Lord, didst continue to press sore upon me with a severe mercy, redoubling the strife of fear and shame, lest I should leave off struggling and my chain should grow again, and bind me faster than ever."

His struggle, his prayers, and tears won for him the grace of true repentance, and his hesitation was mastered. Opening St. Paul's Epistles, he lighted on the words: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14). And he recalled to mind, was not St. Antony converted by a word from the Scripture? He forthwith told Alipius his resolve; he, too, was won over, and thereupon they entered the house, and told the good news to St. Monica. That one moment of heavenly joy repaid the patient mother for her years and years of sorrow and of prayer.

An ardent penitent Augustine proved himself. The more he had sinned, the longer he had delayed, de-

spising God's mercies, the more he now gave himself to prayer and every holy exercise. "Too late have I loved Thee" was his repentant sigh to his Redeemer. He dedicated himself unreservedly to the Church. Though eminently fitted by education, eloquence, genius, to carry on God's work for souls, he did not hurry, but for three years subdued that heart of his, learned humility and total trust in God. What a foundation of repentance and humility he laid we can judge from his after life. Who has reared to himself a greater monument of holy achievement than St. Augustine? Preacher, writer, refuter of heretics, guardian of the truth and holy discipline, founder of monks and nuns, day and night he prayed and laboured for God's Church.

But in his greatness and his holiness he would have us remember what he had been. Fearing the applause and praise of men, he says in his "Confessions": "See what I am from this book; believe me who bear testimony of myself, and regard not what others say of me. Praise with me the goodness of God for the great mercy He has shown in me, and pray for me that He will be pleased to finish what He hath begun in me, and that He suffer me not to destroy myself."

We reverence this great Saint, and we most humbly thank God that He has left him a model to us all in his holy conversion of life. We are confident that he will help us in our needs and struggles in memory, and in gratitude for the graces God gave to him. By thy example, blessed Augustine, may we be moved to be brave and break with sin, and give ourselves unreservedly to the service of God.

Confession and Communion

BLESSED JOHN VIANNEY, CURÉ OF ARS

SEPTEMBER 3, 1859

"I shall raise Me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to My heart."—1 KINGS ii. 35.

IT is often said: "Are there any Saints in these days?" The beatification of the venerable servant of God, blessed John Vianney, the curé of Ars, is a plain answer to the question. Dying in 1859, surely we may claim him as one of our own days. His lifework is a wonderful testimony to the power of God's grace over the hearts of sinners. He well deserves the title of the Apostle of the Confessional.

Although studying for the priesthood, he was by an error drawn for a conscript in 1809. Without any fault of his, he was unwittingly a deserter, and was for a period kept in hiding by some friends. Fearing that he had lost his vocation, ill-health and affliction of heart were his lot, but submission to the holy Will of God was faithfully cherished in his soul.

Being restored in time to the seminary, his humility and self-effacement encouraged his companions to think him dull and backward. God, however, enlightened his superiors to see his genuine worth; his piety was recognized as far outweighing any deficiency in learning, and he was ordained priest in August,

1815. For a little while he was assistant-priest at Ecully, and even there we obtain a glimpse at the hidden holiness and austerity of his life. His demeanour was such that from the first his confessional was continually surrounded. "The eve of great festivals," we read in his Life, "he passed the day and part of the night in the sacred tribunal, scarcely finding time to offer his Mass, recite his Office, and hurriedly take his one and modest repast."

At the death of the parish priest he was removed to Ars, and there remained as its pastor till his death. Religion in most places was at a low ebb, for it had suffered severely in the French Revolution and the wars of Napoleon, and was only here and there, as at Ecully, renewing its vigour and fervour. Ars was not one of the places that had taken new life. It was suffering from the greatest spiritual poverty and apathy. Virtue was little known and little practised. The majority of the parish had forgotten their souls and their salvation. Sunday's observance was kept in dancing on the green in front of the church and frequenting the inns. What grief of heart for the young priest, full of the fervour of the seminary and the edification of the large mission he had just left! Five or six people made the congregation at Sunday's Mass. How many priests would have resented having Ars for a parish, and thought of the Apostolate in the great cities or foreign lands, where thousands were waiting for the messenger of Christ? But not so blessed John Vianney. Obedience had sent him there, and it was for him humbly to work in his Master's vineyard, and do his best. "A faithful priest, who shall do according to My heart."

To two things he applied himself with all the earnest-

ness of his soul—prayer and charity. He won all hearts, and especially those of the young; by his meekness and kindliness, and the night was given to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He made the most of the few good people that were around him, beginning with daily evening prayers, frequent Communions, and by degrees perpetual adoration. And the little mustard-seed took root and grew apace under the blessing of Almighty God. His special patroness was St. Philomena, and in answer to his prayers to her some cures were worked upon the sick. Rumour of this was spread far and near, and not only his own villagers, but many from a distance, began to be attracted to Ars. Confession, followed by a Holy Communion, was his one aim, and those who simply came to hear him seldom departed before kneeling at his feet. His life of prayer drew their unwilling souls to repentance. How often did he cry out to them: "You say you are not worthy to receive our Lord; no, but you have great, great need of Him."

Thus commenced that wonderful series of pilgrimages that continued for thirty years. In 1826 there were twenty thousand come to seek forgiveness of their sins at his feet, and that number annually increased, and for years that frail but brave father passed fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen hours a day in the Confessional. How many souls now in heaven learned compunction from his sympathy, his tears, his words on the Passion and Death of Christ! His own sorrow and dread of sin enkindled the same in their hearts. God often enlightened him to read the souls of his penitents, and if shame was concealing a sin, he lovingly whispered it to them, and the false shame was put to flight. And if their hearts were not brave enough to abandon

occasions of evil and renounce some much-loved sinful object, his prayers obtained for them courage and strength to be manful and abandon it.

This life went on to the end. The work grew so that several other priests were sent to assist him. But he himself was always at his post. He grew older and weaker, and his penitents grew more numerous! And the last day of his working life—four days before he died—was a sample of the rest. He was hearing confessions between sixteen and seventeen hours, for he had begun at midnight, his Mass, a short catechetical instruction, his Office, and a few moments for a little food, and at nine o'clock that night he came feebly tottering to his room, and, sinking into a chair, he sighed: "I can do no more. This is my poor end." And so it was. His confessional saw him no more; the crowds were waiting, the hours went on, but no good curé came. Then Mass time! Then the whole place realized that the father must be dying. Sad indeed was the grief of both pilgrims and parishioners. It seemed impossible that he would hear no more confessions, never stand at the altar again or visit St. Philomena's Chapel. His work was over. God had raised him up a faithful priest, who had worked according to His heart.

Though in heaven now, is his soul less filled with sympathy for sinners, less burning with the love of God than when he was on earth? We know that it is not so, but rather he is longing more and more for all to come back to their good Lord. What better helper can we have than this blessed curé of Ars to prepare us for confession, to enkindle sorrow in our hearts, to suggest generous resolves to break with sin, to lead us to frequent Communion?

A Patroness of a Holy Death

ST. THECLA

SEPTEMBER 23, TIME OF THE APOSTLES

"Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."—ACTS xiv. 21.

AMONGST those who heard St. Paul speak these words we may piously conjecture was Thecla, who was converted by him in this city of Iconium. The Apostles had made a stay of some length in this city, where he converted a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks. The Jews, however, were jealous of the Gentiles, and had raised a sedition against Paul and Barnabas, who retired farther into the country, and preached at Lystra and Derbe. The same fate overtook them there, and St. Paul had been stoned and borne away as dead. It was on his return journey through Iconium that St. Paul spoke these words: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."

They might have been meant especially for the young maiden, Thecla, whose young and ardent soul had eagerly drunk in the inspired words of the Apostle of the Gentiles. She was rich, well versed in the sciences and literature of Greece, and a marriage had been arranged for her with a son of a rich and noble house. But the faith of Jesus Christ had enlightened her soul;

He had called her, and she, as St. Paul himself when converted, had said: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). Her soul had been taught the beauty of virginity, and she had given herself wholly to her Lord. Parents, friends, her suitor himself tried in every way to obtain her consent to the marriage, but in vain. At length she succeeded in escaping from her home; but she was tracked by the rejected and indignant youth, who again tried all artifices to win her consent. Rejected love turned to hatred, and he had her brought back and denounced to the pagan authorities as a Christian. Thecla, by the grace of God, was firm in her faith, and rejoiced that she, too, might say: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."

The acts of her martyrdom, which occurred so early in the Christian era, perhaps A.D. 45 or 47, very easily and naturally became garnished with many episodes which are not authentic. What we learn, however, from such writers as St. Isidore of Pelusium, SS.Gregory of Nyssa and Nazianzen, SS. Ambrose and Augustine, we may safely rely on. By them she is styled the "proto-martyr" of her sex. Such accusations were brought against her that she was condemned to be torn to pieces by wild beasts. Undaunted, she stood there exposed in the amphitheatre, with thousands of cruel eyes gloating over her fate, and behold! lions, leopards, tigers rushing into the arena—kinder, gentler than the men and women gazing on her—came and crouched at her feet, and caressed them. The keepers did all they could to urge them to ferocity, the yells of the infuriated spectators should have driven them wild; but all in vain, they might have been lambs playing with a shepherdess!

The virgin was reserved for another day's spectacle. A huge fire was laid, and Thecla secured in the midst. It was enkindled, the fierce flames shot up and encricled her, when suddenly a storm of rain burst over the place, and extinguished the fire, and there stood Thecla, who had armed herself with the sign of the Cross, unscathed, not a hair of her head was scorched. Again, a third time, the rage of the persecutors found vent against her. The Breviary tells us that she was cast into a pit alive with venomous serpents. The Almighty watched over the noble witness of the faith, and once more rescued her to the confusion of the pagans, and the consolation and strengthening of her fellow-Christians. Having bravely faced death, although she was delivered from these "cruel and atrocious tortures," as the Church styles them, Venerable Bede says she is justly styled a martyr.

After this her freedom must have been granted her, for we find that she followed St. Paul in his apostolic journeys, and then she became an anchoret. God spared her many years, for the infant Church needed her prayers and example that others might have the same spirit in their hearts, that spirit of strength and courage in temptation, peril, and when face to face with death. How many souls has blessed Thecla won to God by her example, and by the prayers of those long years in retirement! Such prayers are powerful with God, and cannot be denied. "Virgins' prayers are the dowry they bring to Christ. He attends to their desires with the affection of a spouse," says Tertullian.

No wonder that St. Thecla is styled the Patroness of a Holy Death. Such steadfastness, such courage have merited for her the veneration of the Church and popular devotion from the earliest days. And how

few now have even heard of St. Thecla, know anything about her, ever think of saying a prayer to her, whose prayers would avail us so much if we only besought her? Many for the first time will hear St. Thecla prayed to when they come to die! The Church has enshrined her glorious name in that solemn prayer which is said for the dying—the commending the soul to God. "Go forth, O Christian soul!" the priest or some good person will read over us as we lie dying, please God. "Receive, O Lord, Thy servant into that place of salvation hoped for from Thy mercy." Thirteen times he will repeat "Deliver, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant from the pains of hell, from the snares of evil, and from all tribulations, as Thou didst the soul of Noe from the deluge, Lot from the fire of Sodom," and the rest. Thirteen instances from the Old Testament; and then: "As Thou didst Peter and Paul from prison." Then comes the prayer which does such honour to our Saint—the only Saint mentioned after the Apostles: "And as Thou didst deliver the most blessed Thecla, Virgin and Martyr, from those most atrocious torments, so vouchsafe to deliver the soul of Thy servant, and grant him to rejoice with Thee in the heavenly kingdom."

May we be conscious when this prayer is said over us; may we join in it, and, lovingly helped by St. Thecla, may we, having passed through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of God!

All for Jesus

ST. TERESA

October 15, 1583

"Be zealous for that which is good."—Gal. iv. 18.

Though in admiring St. Teresa we see so very much that is quite beyond our powers of emulation, yet even that makes us thank God that He has been loved and served in so glorious and heroic a manner. But she not only loved and suffered, but she wrote—both her Life, the "Way of Perfection," and other books—and in these we find much that we can learn and obey.

In her early life, living as she did in lax and careless times, she gave little sign of her future ardour and zeal. In her humility she exaggerates her sinfulness; but it cannot be denied that she was treading perilously near the path of tepidity, vanity, and worldliness. Novel-reading—or romances, as they were then called—engrossed her so much that there was no room for real devotion in her heart. Vanity, too, in dress and the desire of making herself look her best was enervating that soul destined for such higher aims. And a foolish, worldly girl-companion was insensibly leading her astray from the path that Christ our Lord was bidding her to follow. It draws us nearer to this great Saint to know that she was once like this. Thanks to a holy and watchful father, this state of things was put a stop

to, and Teresa was sent to a convent. Here she put on the Carmelite habit, but worldliness was underneath it for a time. Gossip in the parlour was more loved than her spiritual duties. On the other hand, she loved pious books and to listen to sermons.

Her Divine Master was biding His time to call her to give herself wholly to Him, and to detach her from all things else. In His love He afflicted her with a most painful illness. For three or four years she was a wretched invalid, reduced so that once she was left for dead. Conformity to the holy Will of God purified her heart, and she learned to bear her sufferings, not only with patience, but with joy and gratitude. She tells us that she was perfectly restored to health through the intercession of St. Joseph, to whom she had a lifelong devotion, and she testifies that she was never refused any blessing that she asked through him.

It would be to no purpose to follow St. Teresa in her trials and incredible labours to reform the Carmelite Order, and how she, a poor nun, could build thirty convents for the friars and sisters of her Order. But rather let us take a few of her maxims that she gives us in her "Way of Perfection," in which the holiest wisdom and common sense are so blended, and verify from her life that she not only taught, but practised what she wrote.

She was eminently the mistress of holy prayer. To prevent distractions and to ensure devotion, she taught the sisters to remember that they were not alone whilst praying. The Master is there, looking and listening! And if their hearts were distracted carelessly, He is waiting, waiting patiently for their hearts to speak to Him. She would have them habitually look at Him, and see and realize that He is beholding them. Again, in prayer, when our hearts are set on something we

would have, do we not try to make God subservient to our own ends ? It is not His blessed Will, simply and purely, that we pray to have accomplished; we are despondent if our own way is not brought about. That she condemns as selfishness. Out of gratitude to our Blessed Lord we should have a pure intention and an earnest endeavour. Teresa's own custom had taught her this. For twenty years each night she pictured our Saviour praying in His agony: " Not My will, but Thine!" And in her prayers she invariably added, " if it is God's Will," even in her holiest endeavours of reform. Hence if things appeared to go against her wishes, she at once humbly submitted and preferred that which came from the hand of God.

A second most notable lesson she gives us is on the forgiveness of injuries. Her words are : " Forgive us as we forgive. Christ did not say, Forgive us our sins because of great penances, fasts, prayers, but because we forgive others." It matters not how grievous our sins may have been, they will be forgiven freely by the good God if we forgive others. Therefore she loved herself to suffer contradictions and persecutions that she might practise this forgiveness. Not one harsh word escaped her lips against those who called her a hypocrite, a vain deluded woman, one possessed by the devil. Rather she blessed them, thanked them, and humbly submitted without a word to the hardest privation when once she was judged unworthy of frequent Communion. The cruelty of these oppositions was in this, that it was not bad people, but her friends and good people, who misguidedly slandered and misunderstood her. Her words show us how she triumphed in forgiving and gloried in suffering for her Lord. " I return God a thousand thanks," she writes, " for what greater pleasure can we have than to suffer

for so good a God? The Cross is the secure and beaten path to lead our souls to Him. Let us, then, love it and embrace it. . . . I have learned this by experience that the true remedy against our falling is to lean on the Cross, and to trust in Him Who was fastened to it. . . . If we will not help Him to carry the Cross, how can we ever think of coming to enjoy that which He has purchased for us at the expense of so much Blood?"

Finally, let us hear what St. Teresa would teach us about the Holy Eucharist. She regarded the Real Presence as the pledge of God's love. Sustained by that faith, how could she fear opposition or failure as long as she worked simply for God? "Give us this day our daily bread" St. Teresa always understood as the Bread of Life. This was needed that souls might have the strength to fulfil the other petitions of that blessed prayer, the "Our Father," to sanctify God's Name, to advance His Kingdom, to do His Will, to obtain pardon, to triumph over temptations, to be secure from evil!

And what a safeguard to a Holy Communion is contained in that simple word that she has left! "If God comes as a visitor to our soul we should see to the lodging and stay with Him"; prepare our heart and make it a fitting guest-chamber, and to show Him honour, not to leave Him all alone, but to bear Him company and fulfil His every wish.

How simply the great soul of Teresa reveals itself to us! May she help us to grasp and understand her words of wisdom, and obtain for us a spark of that devotedness that burned in her own breast. Remember her words: "Be strong and faithful, even if God delays; be unselfish, loving not to get, but to give; be self-effacing—feeling is no test of love, but the proof of it is doing and persevering in doing" all for Jesus.

The Holy Will of God

ST. GERARD MAJELLA

OCTOBER 16, 1756

"He that doth the Will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. vii. 21.

THE Holy Will of God should be the supreme rule of life. The wisdom of the Saints, the perfection of the Saints, consists in doing the Holy Will of God. Endeavour, zeal, austerity, miracles even cannot claim heaven, but having done the Will of God is the passport to eternal glory. As our Blessed Lord said: "He that doth the Will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

All this we see so simply, yet so touchingly, portrayed in the life of the humble Redemptorist lay-brother, St. Gerard Majella, that the great and necessary lesson is easily learned and remembered from his example. From his childhood God chose him for his very own. Inspired when he was a little boy of seven to approach the altar-rails, the priest, knowing that he had not been prepared, passed him by. The child retired in tears. God had taught him, and his heart was yearning for the heavenly food; and that night St. Michael the Archangel brought him his first Communion! Repeatedly in his childhood he was favoured with the appari-

tion of the Divine Child on the altar from the consecration to the priest's communion.

Thus was he prepared in piety and love for his life's work to do the Will of God from his heart. It is not what he did, but the why and the wherefore of his doing it, that made his actions so pleasing and acceptable to his Lord. Let his own words tell us. He says: "My only undertaking must be to do the Will of God, in being as God pleases, and doing His Will without reserve. To-day and every day I give myself up to Thy good pleasure. In all temptations and trials I will say 'Thy Will be done.' . . . My supreme resolution is to give myself unreservedly to God. Thy good pleasure, O my God, and not my own. It must needs be that I detach myself from all that is not God. I will have it at heart to seek my own interests in nothing." On the door of his room he wrote: "Here is done that which God wills, as God wills, and as long as God wills."

To prove that these were not isolated phrases, but were the only and the constant yearning of his heart, we learn that the very mention of the Holy Will of God often enraptured him. The very melody of his favourite hymn—one composed by St. Alphonsus, his master—the hymn on the Holy Will of God, threw him into an ecstasy:

> "'Tis Thy good pleasure, not mine own,
> In Thee, my God, I love alone;
> And nothing I desire of Thee,
> But what Thy goodness wills for me."

Does not this reveal the very heart of the young Saint to us all? And this spirit we find inspiring and actuating all the duties and labours of his life.

His interior life—that is, his prayers, meditations, communions—aimed simply to feed this Divine fire of

loving the Divine Will. "Pray without ceasing; in all things give thanks, for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. iv. 3). When in his charity he prayed for others, he hesitated not to demand miracles; he knew no bounds in giving himself to God, and he never doubted the limits of God's goodness when he asked for favours. "For whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John iii. 22). To these prayers of Gerard how many sick owed their recovery, and the starving the loaves, that multiplied in his blessed hands! That heart that poured forth those prayers was fulfilling St. John's words again: "And this is the confidence which we have towards Him, that whatsoever we shall ask according to His Will, He heareth us" (1 John v. 14).

Being a religious, under the vow of obedience, St. Gerard embraced every even the least opportunity of practising obedience. That was the Will of God. The word of a superior, the wish of a brother, the toll of the bell—all were to him the voice of the Will of God. Such perfection had he acquired in obeying that even when lying ill, at the command of obedience the symptoms of his illness ceased, and he who had been thought to be dying came and joined the community at their duties.

St. Gerard was not in Holy Orders, but merely a lay-brother, but nevertheless he frequently accompanied the fathers from town to town giving missions. This was his greatest delight! Looking upon the crowds of penitents thronging the churches, he rejoiced to be enabled to fulfil the Will of God. He could help to reclaim sinners. "This is the Will of God your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 8). To this end he went

from house to house imploring all to attend the mission services. His fervent importunity few could resist; if words could not prevail, he fell upon his knees and prayed for them. God granted him the power oftentimes to work miracles, curing the sick and ailing children simply with the sign of the Cross. And sometimes when obdurate sinners were still unmoved he had the gift of reading their consciences, and to their amazement and fear he would make known to them the sins that were keeping them back from repentance. Thus he led the most hardened to the sacred tribunal of the Sacrament of Penance. Happy the missionaries assisted by such a worker. He could not administer the Sacraments, but his appearance, his words, his miracles in many a town drew crowds to repentance. Gerard was renowned throughout Italy for many years as "the wonder-worker" before England had the happiness of knowing his very name. But now, thank God, even in this Protestant land, he is a power. His help is sought by so many and such various clients. Sinners ask for help to repent, the innocent for fervour and conformity to God's Will, and the ailing and the dying for patience, resignation, or, perchance, a cure. And even in such extreme cases we praise God that St. Gerard has proved his power with God and his charity to the afflicted.

Only thirty years of age, and Gerard had fulfilled his task on earth. Reading the description of his death, there again we find mention of the Holy Will of God. For ten days he lay in intense pain and suffering, but patient and perfectly conformed to the Divine Will. The dying Saint told the infirmarian that he had had no other desire than to do God's Will in everything, and that therefore he now died in peace and free from all

anxiety. For a short while the tempter tried to worry and annoy him, but presently a very different vision appeared, and Gerard, suddenly kneeling on his bed, cried out: "The Madonna! let us pay her homage." Our Lady's coming was in answer to a lifelong prayer. And another prayer of his was answered likewise. He had prayed that he might be conformed to the image of his Lord even to the end, and pass away almost alone and uncomforted by any words of human consolation. Faithful to the end he died, fulfilling the words: "That doing the Will of God you may receive the promise" (Heb. x. 36).

Devotion to the Sacred Heart

BLESSED MARGARET MARY

October 17, 1690

"I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?"—Luke xii. 49.

The spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in these our own days is one of the greatest blessings, for which we should be grateful to Almighty God. In the Gospel our Lord bids us: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart" (Matt. xxii. 37). In this devotion, therefore, we direct the love of our heart to His Sacred Heart, not as entitled to our homage more than the entirety or than any other portion of His Sacred Person, but because we are accustomed to attribute the emotions of love to the heart. Thus the Heart of Jesus awakens in us the memory of the love which He has shown us from His Incarnation till He expired on the Cross. In one word, the object of this devotion is to arouse in us love for Jesus Christ by the remembrance of His love for us.

The marvellous growth of this devotion proves it to be of God. If some eminent Sovereign Pontiff had been its originator and propagator, and its cause strengthened and forwarded by his authority, aided by the efforts of Bishops and priests, its growth would still have been the cause of admiration and wonder. But God chooses the weak things of this world to

effect His marvels. Who, then, was the apostle of devotion to the Sacred Heart? The devotion itself had existed certainly from the days of St. Gertrude, and perhaps earlier. It might be found in some diocese or convent, but who was to make it world-wide? God, desiring to cast this fire of love on the earth, looked for a heart where it might be most easily enkindled, where it would burn a perfect holocaust to His honour and glory. And from that one heart's devotion He destined that fire to spread and be enkindled in millions of other hearts as they learned to love Him, and to form the intention of doing everything for His sake.

Such a heart was found at Paray-le-Monial, in the Visitation Convent, where dwelt Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque. As a child she had always felt the greatest horror of sin. When a girl of twelve, she prayed four hours a day. She fasted, mortified herself with penitential severity, and gave what little she had in loving alms to the poor. Later on she became a nun. It was now God's time to purify this golden heart of hers in the fire of bodily suffering and desolation of soul. She was misunderstood by the community, and even good persons kept aloof from her. Nobly persevering, in spite of all afflictions and temptations, when her heart was purified so that self was no longer in it, and it was totally all God's own, then her Divine Spouse showered down His graces, illuminations, and visions upon her. In 1675 she received the great revelation of devotion to the Sacred Heart. This devotion was to renew the memory of that Divine love with which the only-begotten Son of God took upon Himself our nature, taught us by His own example to be meek and humble of heart, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. And this devotion was meant to

make our own souls grow in humility, patience, generosity, and union with God.

The spirit of evil dreaded the spread of this devotion, which would frustrate so many of his malicious designs to ruin the souls of men. He saw in it the safeguard of the innocence of youth, with its morning aspiration, the intention of doing all for Jesus, the confraternity meetings, the instructions, the frequent Communions. He saw in it the perseverance of men and women, in the world, but not of the world, with their hearts raised up to the heart of their Saviour. He saw in it the rescues of poor sinners, even on their death-beds, effected by the piety and assistance of the associates. He saw in this devotion, finally, the holy deaths of those who all lifelong had been faithful to it; and with malignant hatred he beheld the millions and millions of Holy Communions, "the tokens of eternal glory," that would be received, uniting their Saviour to those hearts striving to love Him.

Remembering this, we can clearly understand the origin of the opposition raised in so many quarters against this new devotion. In her Life, blessed Margaret Mary tells us how our Divine Lord said to her: "Fear not, I shall reign in spite of My enemies, and of all those who oppose Me."

We see from this holy nun's example how fidelity to this devotion will lead souls on to the highest perfection. She made a vow to our Lord: "I will do what I believe to be most perfect or most glorious to Thy Sacred Heart, and will not refuse to do or suffer anything in order to make it known, and loved, and glorified." How many are in heaven now who learned this self-abandonment, and who strove in life and death to be faithful to this noble resolve from the example of blessed Margaret Mary!

Anyone desirous to learn this devotion must be prepared to meet His Saviour with the Cross, and to be asked to help to carry it. That is the test of true devotion. "My love reigns in suffering, triumphs in humility," were words she heard from our Lord. After all her sufferings of body and soul, blessed Margaret Mary should know, and she tells us: "All other graces are not comparable to carrying the Cross with Jesus Christ."

Even in England we can lovingly thank God that this devotion has a secure home in almost every congregation. Its great strength consists in this, that it is welded into a confraternity. It is not each one, on his own endeavour, trying to grope his way a little nearer to heaven. But those who are devout to the Sacred Heart are an organized army of the lovers of Jesus Christ. There is strength—strength blessed by God — in such a union. Forgetfulness can have no place in it. For the morning offering, the Rosary leaflets, the meetings, the monthly *Messenger*, the days appointed for Holy Communion—yea, the very badge—are all mementoes lest we should forget! And we cannot grow dispirited, too weary and weak, for the daily prayers should arouse us and the Holy Eucharist strengthen us to persevere.

We should remember that one great object of this devotion is to make reparation. How much has our dear Lord suffered from mankind, and all these sufferings wounded that loving Heart of His, which was finally broken on the Cross! By our devotedness and piety we have to endeavour to counteract the ravages of impiety, infidelity, blasphemy, disregard of virtue, disobedience to God's law, and the untiring efforts of Satan. Ask blessed Margaret Mary to let us join with her in being, in our own poor little way, apostles of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Spirit of the Gospel

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST

OCTOBER 18

"And Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."—LUKE ii. 19.

ST. LUKE, diligently and lovingly, acquired the knowledge of all the sayings and events recorded in his Gospel, as he tells us, from those who, from the beginning, had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word. These were the Apostles and disciples who had been with our Lord in His earthly life.

But there was one who had told the Apostles of events that had happened years before they had seen the Saviour. There was one who had heard the Angel's voice at Nazareth, whose home was with Joseph, who had held the Babe of Bethlehem to her breast, who had heard the prophecy of Simeon: "And Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." Yes, "the seat of wisdom" had taught the Apostles, and doubtless blessed Luke had heard from her own lips very many things recorded in his Gospel.

How otherwise could he have given us the detailed account of the birth of John the Baptist? And the picture of the Annunciation? "And the Angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the

Lord is with thee : blessed art thou amongst women" (i. 28). And Mary must have told him, too, of Bethlehem, of the Angels and the shepherds "glorifying and praising God." Who taught him Mary's glorious canticle, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," but she herself, from whose heart it had burst forth ? An undying hymn of praise, indeed, for the Church has taken it up, and at every Vesper hour it rises, and will rise, a voice of exultation to the Lord.

And our Blessed Lady's influence on St. Luke's Gospel does not seem to end with the birth and infancy of Christ. The scope and object of his Gospel seems to be the revealing of the tenderness of the Redeemer, the beauty of His religion, and the influence it would have on the human character. St. Luke gives us many parables in common with St. Matthew, but exclusively we learn from him of the Good Samaritan, which is a description of the mercy of her Divine Son, which our Lady would love to keep and ponder over in her heart. Again, we find here the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Who but the Angels in heaven can tell how many repentant sinners have taken courage from these loving words to rise and seek forgiveness from their Father ? And Lazarus the beggar, who lay at the rich man's gate, is not forgotten. Poverty and labour, from the mention of him, have taken good heart to themselves, and endure in trust and patience, because when Lazarus died he was carried by Angels to Abraham's bosom; who afterwards said to the rich man in his torments: "Remember thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented" (xvi. 25). And St. Luke pictures to us the publican who stood afar off, and would not as much

as raise up his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: " Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Thus we are taught to pray, how simply, how touchingly, yet how convincingly, for the Gospel adds that he went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee.

Again, we have the apology, the pleading for, the vindication of Mary Magdalen in the Pharisee's house, and, finally, her absolution by the Divine Redeemer Himself. " And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with her tears hath washed My feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. . . . And He said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace " (vii. 44-50).

A lesson to everyone of us, sinners as we are, that love is the foundation of contrition, teaching us the value of tears, of penance, of satisfaction; that inward, secret repentance is not enough, that there must be outward acts—Magdalen's very presence was a confession, and our Blessed Lord spoke the absolution! The consoling Sacrament of Penance that our loving Redeemer championed Himself to give us confidence over and over again to seek forgiveness from His mercy.

How impregnated must St. Luke have been with the tender love of Jesus and Mary! No wonder that St. Paul says of him, " the brother, whose praise is in the Gospel through all the churches" (2 Cor. viii. 18),

and that he adopted it and calls it his own Gospel (Rom. ii. 16). St. Luke was his companion in his travels, his fellow-labourer in the ministry. It was his ambition to share with the great Apostle in his toils, fatigues, dangers, and sufferings.

At St. Paul's request he wrote his second book, the Acts of the Apostles, to leave an authentic record of the wonderful works of God in planting the Church, the miracles by which he confirmed it, and which were an invincible proof of the truth of His Resurrection and of His holy religion. Having joined St. Paul, the later chapters of the Acts are almost entirely a record of the labours and miracles of the Apostle of the Gentiles. He sailed with him to Rome, and shared the perils of the voyage and shipwreck (Acts xxvii.), and was his faithful companion to the end. St. Paul, shortly before his martyrdom, writes to Timothy from Rome that they had all left him, and only Luke was with him.

After the great Apostle had laid down his life for Christ, his fellow-labourer Luke went forth alone once again to preach the Gospel in the eastern countries. Till an advanced age he persevered preaching and labouring to win souls to Christ, and a glorious martyrdom closed a noble life's endeavour.

But his work did not end then, for his Gospel lives! and is still subduing the hearts of men to the yoke of Christ. Alas! how little is it venerated by many who hear it, read it, and know it to be the inspired Word of God! How different would our lives be if our souls were filled with its spirit, if we pondered on its words—the words that Mary kept in her heart, the words St. Luke wrote, the words St. Paul has often preached!

Devotion to the Dead

SS. AMBROSE, AUGUSTINE, CHRYSOSTOM, ODILO, BERNARD, PETER DAMIAN, AND OTHERS

"He that is a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is proved in distress."—PROV. xvii. 17.

THERE are several misconceptions widely prevalent concerning devotion to the souls in Purgatory. It is often regarded as a recent devotion sprung up in these latter days, as May being the month of Mary. Again, it is regarded as the devotion for nuns and women and children, as if men had something more important to remember and trouble about. And, lastly, there are those who speak flippantly about Purgatory, and who declare that they will only be too satisfied if they ever get there! Let us find answers to all this from the Saints of the early ages and the days of faith—Saints who compel attention and respect from the name they bear as doctors and illustrious writers of the Church.

In all the most ancient forms of Mass express mention is made of prayer and sacrifice for the dead. Tertullian declares that the custom came down from Apostolic times. St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his "Instructions" says: "We pray for all among us who are departed this life, believing that this will be the greatest relief to them, for whom it is made, whilst the holy and tremendous Victim lies present." St. John Chrysostom also says: "To pray for the faithful

departed in the tremendous mysteries was decreed by the Apostles." St. Ambrose preaching at the funeral of the Emperor Theodosius—whom once he had rebuked and penanced and who had repented—says: "I loved him, and therefore I follow him into the country of the living. Neither will I forsake him till by tears and prayers I shall bring the man whither his merits call him, unto the holy mountain of the Lord." Again, the same Saint preaching on Valentinian the Younger: "Give the Holy Mysteries to the dead. Let us, with pious earnestness, beg repose for his soul. Lift up your hands with me, that at least by this duty we may make some returns for his benefits. No day shall pass you over in silence, no prayer of mine shall ever be closed without remembering you. You shall have a share in all my sacrifices."

St. Augustine writes: "Nor is it to be denied that the souls of the departed are relieved by the piety of their living friends, when the Sacrifice of the Mediator is offered for them, or alms are given in the Church." But St. Augustine did more than write or preach about it: we know how lovingly he fulfilled the duty. St. Monica, his mother, when dying had said to him: "Lay this body anywhere; be not concerned about that. The only thing I ask is that you make remembrance of me at the altar of the Lord wherever you are." At her burial, the sacrifice of our ransom was offered for her. "I pray for the sins of my mother" he writes; "hear me by the remedy of our wounds, Who hung on the Cross and sitting on the right hand, intercedes for us. . . . Forgive her, forgive her, I beseech Thee, Who hast promised mercy to the merciful" ("Confessions," *lib.* 9, c. 13).

More powerful, indeed, than their words are the

examples of the Saints; and coming down from these remote ages to the glorious monastic time of Cluny and Citeaux, let us seek proofs there for devotion to the souls in Purgatory.

St. Odilo, Abbot of Cluny, in the year 998, was moved by God's grace to institute in his monastery the commemoration of "All Souls." It seemed so natural to him that celebrating one day "All Saints," that the next day prayer should be made for "All Souls" waiting and longing to join the Saints in heaven; and whose hour of bliss could be so accelerated by the prayers, Communions, and Masses of the devout. "All Souls' Day" soon was known and adopted from abbey to abbey, from cathedrals to parish churches, till shortly the voice of Rome spoke, and it became the universal practice of the Church. From Odilo's love and pity for the suffering souls, what a harvest, for nine hundred years, of graces and blessings has been gathered by the Church for its poor children in Purgatory!

St. Bernard likewise gives us an example of devotion to the dead, and how pleasing it was to God. After his mother's death, he resolved daily to recite seven Psalms for the repose of her soul. He was only young then, but he persevered for a time. One night, however, wearied and somewhat remiss, he omitted the prayers for his mother. Next day the Abbot St. Stephen called him and asked: "Whom did you commission yesterday to say the prayers for your mother?" God had revealed the neglect of his pious practice to his superior! for absolutely no one knew either of his practice or its neglect. How pleasing to God, then, are prayers for the departed, that a miracle should be worked to warn Bernard lest he should grow careless!

This rebuke was never forgotten, and throughout his life St. Bernard was a devoted and zealous friend of the souls of the faithful departed.

A little boy gives us another lesson on this same subject. Peter Damian was left an orphan at an early age, and one of his brothers gave him a home, if a home it could be called, for his biographer tells us that Peter was treated not like a slave, but as a beast! As soon as he was able, he was sent to tend the swine. His life was one of abject poverty and neglect. One day he found a piece of money—a silver coin. Picture what that was to such a boy! A fortune it would seem: perhaps he had never had a penny of his own before. What pleasure would that coin represent to a half-starved, bare-footed boy. And what did he do with it? Peter took the money to the parish priest, and asked him to say Mass for his father's soul! That simple fact proves two things: First, that in those days the poor were instructed about Purgatory, for Peter must have heard of it on Sundays in the church; and, secondly, that the poor then, as now, love to have masses said for their dear departed ones. We cannot say that his fame and sanctity had this act of charity and self-denial for its foundation; but it is consoling to remember that the first thing we learn of the great Benedictine monk, St. Peter Damian, Cardinal and Archbishop, was that, even as a boy in dire poverty, he gave his all for a Mass for the dead.

Let us reverence, then, this devotion of prayers for the dead, as one of the earliest and even apostolic practices of the Church; to reverence it as favoured by the lives of the greatest Saints; and as a practice that will obtain mercy for us, because we ourselves have been merciful to others.

A last word to those who speak lightly of Purgatory. This is no new thing; and we find such men rebuked many hundred years ago. St. Cæsarius of Arles, who died in 542, speaks of such. "A person may say I am not much concerned how long I remain in Purgatory, provided I may come to eternal life. Let no one reason thus. The fire of Purgatory will be more dreadful than whatever torments can be seen, imagined, or endured in this world. And how does anyone know whether he will stay days, months, or years? He who is afraid now to put his finger into the fire, does he not fear lest he be then all buried in torments for a long time?" And Venerable Bede asserts: "The fire of Purgatory will be more intolerable than all the torments that can be felt in this life." And St. Augustine writes: "Those souls suffer by wonderful but real ways more than our imagination can represent."

Alas! those who think little of Purgatory now will realize its punishments when it is too late. As they despised it in life, and as they neglected to show mercy to others, when they were on earth, it will come home to them when they are helpless there "that a hard heart shall fare evil at the last" (Ecclus. iii. 27).

Faith

ST. MARTIN OF TOURS

NOVEMBER 11, 397

"A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."—ACTS vi. 5.

As the last of the great persecutions ceased by the order of Constantine the Great, a boy was born of pagan parents in Panonia, who was destined by God to be the glory of the Western Church, and a model to all priests and bishops for all succeeding ages. The name of St. Martin has lived through all these centuries, and the light of his faith, which illumined his own life, has been a beacon pointing the way to heaven for innumerable Christians.

Faith is the characteristic of Martin's life. As a little boy of ten, faith drew him to the Church, and against the will of his parents, he had his name entered amongst the catechumens. Longing to leave the world and to give his life to God, he was compelled to join the army by the law binding the sons of veterans to be enrolled. His faith kept him pure, unsullied, and devout even in camp. His faith discerned our Lord in the persons of the poor, and having distributed all that he had, he divided his very cloak with a poor starving man at the gate of Amiens. The vision of his Divine Master with the cloak, surrounded by Angels, rewarded him. Endeavouring to retire from the army,

he was reproached with cowardice, and in faith he replied: "In the name of the Lord Jesus, and protected, not by helmet and buckler, but by the sign of the Cross, I will enter the battle without fear."

Peace being proclaimed, he was free to carry out his cherished design. He betook himself to St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, and became his disciple. Before being ordained priest, he wished once more to see his parents and convert them. His mother and many others yielded to his entreaties and instructions, but his father died in his infidelity. In Illyria the Arians were in great numbers, and Martin's faith prompted him—though not yet ordained—to preach against them, and oppose them so strenuously that he was publicly scourged and driven from the country; and from Milan he was expelled for the same reason. Hearing that St. Hilary was driven from his see by these very heretics, St. Martin retired to an isolated place and lived as a hermit for some years—not wasted years, but years of preparation for the apostolic time to come.

On St. Hilary's return from exile, St. Martin followed him, and with his counsel built a monastery, the first in France. Here one of the inmates, not yet baptized, died suddenly in Martin's absence. Finding the monks in great grief on his return, the prayer of faith worked his first miracle, St. Martin recalled the dead man to life; he was baptized, and lived for many years. And shortly afterwards, a poor slave, driven by utter misery to hang himself, was likewise restored to life by his prayer. The fame of these miracles caused the people of Tours, at the death of their Bishop, to clamour for St. Martin to rule over them.

It is as the great Bishop of Tours that St. Martin

has and always will be remembered. His zeal now had full scope, and though he loved his monastery and retired to it when he could, the faith had to be spread, churches built, and the shepherd to be vigilant against heresies and ignorance.

Blessed in having a Saint—Sulpicius Severus—for his biographer, we can trust the incidents of his life that have been handed down to us, and thus we know St. Martin as if he had lived in much later times. We are told of him at the altar, celebrating the Holy Mass, aglow with faith, surrounded by a heavenly light. "In the goodness and readiness of his soul he appeased God" for his people (Ecclus. xlv. 29). Busy the whole day through, the night was his own to spend, as he loved, in prayer. That prayer that had such power, that numbers of pagans, possessed by the devil, were freed by it. He fulfilled the word of our Lord in the Gospel: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: in My Name they shall cast out devils" (Mark xvi. 17).

Zealous to extirpate idolatry from his diocese, he caused pagan temples to be demolished, converted multitudes, and faced with calm courage the enmity of the pagan priests. And miracles in answer to his faith invariably came to his aid. Ordering a sacred tree to be felled, to put an end to their idolatrous superstition, the pagan priests most angrily opposed it at first, then cunningly hoping to kill him, agreed to cut it down themselves, if St. Martin would consent to be bound to it on the side to which it leaned. Full of faith, the Saint accepted the terms. When the great tree was ready to crash down, Martin simply made the sign of the Cross, and the tree gently fell in the contrary direction. Awed by such a miracle,

great numbers sought pardon, and, being instructed, were received into the Church. At another place they rushed upon him to murder him; turning, he offered himself intrepidly to be struck down, but they fell back awe-stricken, and repenting, they, too, became his spiritual children.

Entering Paris once, followed by a crowd, he saw a poor leper, and in pity he kissed him and blessed him, and he was forthwith healed. And at Chartres, preaching to a great crowd of infidels, a poor woman brought him her dead child in simple faith, asking his help. With a prayer and a blessing, he restored it to its mother alive and well; and the whole crowd pressed round him beseeching to be made Christians.

Shepherd of his people as he was, sometimes, though most unwillingly, he was compelled to repair to the court of the Emperors to obtain clemency for offenders and help for the poor. Valentinian, prejudiced against him by the Empress, who was an Arian, refused him an audience. His faith showed Martin how to overcome the Emperor, and he prayed and fasted seven days. Thus fortified, he sought his presence. No one opposed his entrance, and at his appearance the Emperor cried out in anger against him, bidding him begone; but immediately flames burst out around him, and leaping up in terror, he recognized the hand of the Almighty in the miracle, and he humbly submitted to the Saint, granted all his requests, and treated him with all honour.

After many years of apostolic labour, of prayer, of church-building, of miracles, Martin foretold his death. His disciples were heartbroken. They were living in strenuous times. Heretics were keen and cunning, and often had the powers of the world at their back,

and rightly his priests and the neighbouring bishops dreaded losing the wisdom, experience, and the miraculous powers of the aged Saint. Recall the hero's words as he lay dying: "Lord, if I am still necessary for Thy people, I refuse not the labour. Thy holy Will be done." He continually raised his eyes and hands towards heaven, never interrupting his prayer. "Suffer me," he said, "to look towards heaven that my soul may be directed to take its flight to the Lord to Whom it is going." Banishing the evil spirit, who appeared to him, in faith he breathed forth his soul to God. The very Angels seem envious that Martin's sojourn on earth should be prolonged, for, as he died, their welcome and their canticles of joy were heard by those around, as St. Severinus, Bishop of Cologne, himself testifies, for he was present, and was witness to this glory of his friend and master.

Can we not confidently trust in his intercession and help, now that he reigns in glory, when we thus recall his faith, his zeal, his love for souls through life and at his very death?

Devotedness to Christ

ST. GERTRUDE

NOVEMBER 15, 1292

"The Son of God, Who loved me."—GAL. ii. 20.

IT is marvellous how a secluded life of a nun, who died over six hundred years ago, stands now for a full refutation of what is often said against convent life, and reveals it in its purity and excellence. And it is no medieval legend that we have to trust, no mere tradition that love and piety may have adorned with mistaken zeal. The calumnies about the idle and ignorant lives of monks and nuns even now, let alone in the Middle Ages, before printing multiplied books and gave all a chance to be educated, are clearly refuted by the life and writings of St. Gertrude, a Benedictine nun. With perhaps the exception of St. Teresa, there is no female writer of the Church who ranks above this holy nun. Though a German, her books were all written in Latin, and they have always been treasured by the Church, and can readily be purchased at the present day.

Gertrude was a typical nun of the thousands and thousands who passed their days under the Rule of St. Benedict. Of noble family, at five years of age she was committed to the care of the Abbess of Eisleben

to be educated. Clever, diligent, and devout, she made equal advancement in learning and piety. When old enough she was professed, taking the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and that other special Benedictine vow of stability—that is, of persevering in the Order. How she observed the strict enclosure we learn from the fact that the only occasion on which she left the convent—and she died at the age of seventy—was when, at the request of a council of Bishops, she took charge of a neighbouring house to bring it up to the perfection which reigned in her own.

Sequestered from the world, hidden and unknown, these zealous nuns we find were in all church and devotional exercises identical, we may say, with sisters of the present time. If we could transpose St. Gertrude and her sisters into some existing convent, keeping the same rule and serving the same good Lord and Master, scarcely a difference could be noticed. Exactly the same Divine Office would be chanted; the same Holy Mass, and the train of sisters approaching for Holy Communion; the same hours devoted to reading, meditation, and holy silence.

And as we learn from St. Gertrude herself, they practised so many of the self-same devotions that are the joy and sweetness of convent life to-day. Never a day did she pass without praying for and doing some penance for the souls in Purgatory. And as she did herself, so would she teach the others. Constant ejaculations and turning in spirit to her Guardian Angel was another pious practice. A tender devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary was specially cultivated by our Saint. One of her prayers (Exercit. vi.) runs thus: "May the most holy heart and soul of

Thy glorious Virgin-Mother Mary give Thee thanks and praise for me, whom Thou didst choose for Mother for the need of my salvation."

Devotion to the Sacred Passion and Death of our Redeemer was also a most prominent feature in her life; and we find mention of the stigmata, though she humbly prayed that they might be only in her heart. She endeavoured to conceal the heavenly favours which she so frequently received, but in vain; for instance, ecstasies during Mass, at Holy Communion, visions in which our Divine Lord spoke to her "as a friend to a friend," and the miracles that happened in answer to her prayers. Her loving Master wished such things to be manifest to be an encouragement and a glory to her sisters. When the poor peasantry around clamoured for her help, when, after a long winter, the ground was frost-bound late in the spring, and they dreaded a famine, a short prayer from St. Gertrude, and the thaw came, and the sun smiled once more, and all the country-side thanked God for His mercy. The same poor people, remembering this, appealed to her again when prolonged wet weather was ruining their harvest, and their hope was again fulfilled by her prayers, to the confusion of the humble Gertrude, but to the glory of God.

Another great devotion, thought to be so modern, and the propagation of which we truly ascribe to the blessed Margaret Mary, we may be surprised to find was well known and loved in the community of St. Gertrude—devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! In instructions which she wrote, we find prayers such as these: "O Jesus, my sweet hope, may Thy Divine Heart, broken with love for me, and which is ever open to all sinners, be the refuge of my departing

soul, when, through Thy infinite love, in a moment all my sinfulness may be absorbed, that I may enter with Thee into the heavenly choir, O beloved of my heart" (Exer. c. vi.). And again: "Thy Divine love has opened to me the most sweet Heart of my Jesus. O Heart brimming over with sweetness, O Heart overflowing with love, O Heart full of mercy, make me die for love and devotedness to Thee. O most dear Heart, I pray Thee absorb all my heart's affection in Thee. . . . Be ever mindful of me; may the sweetness of Thy love refresh my poor heart, I pray. May the tenderness of Thy mercy cover me, for, alas! many are my evil deserts—my good ones none. And grant me, dear Jesus, to love Thee in all things and above all things, to cling fervently to Thee, to hope and trust in Thee" (*ibid.*, c. vii.).

The violet is an inconspicuous flower, but its charm is its fragrance. Then what is the great charm of St. Gertrude, spouse of Christ, in the hidden life of the cloister from childhood to old age, that made her so dear to the Sacred Heart? It was her humility. It is a marvel of the grace of God that one so pure, so ardent in God's service, should think herself unworthy to walk God's earth. And this she really thought. Oftentimes an invalid, through her hard life and fastings and little sleep, when she could not be present at the Divine Office or the Holy Mass, she humbly confessed that it was for her wickedness that she was thus deprived. But above all consolations she placed conformity to the Holy Will of God. Once when our Blessed Lord offered her the choice to be well and attend the Church solemnities or to remain an invalid, she refused to make a choice, but humbly replied: "O Lord, I wish to do Thy Holy Will."

If we wish to be pleasing unto God, let us learn to wish only His good Will, and to be humble, and this prayer of blessed Gertrude would teach us how: "O sweet mercy of God, full of tenderness and clemency, behold in the sorrow and pressing need of my heart, I seek safety in Thy loving Will, for Thou art my whole hope and trust. Thou hast never despised one, sad and sorrowful. Thou hast never rejected the vilest sinner. Thou hast never abandoned one seeking help. Thou hast never passed by one in grievous trouble without a look of mercy. The needy and poor Thou dost always assist, as a mother her child. To all invoking Thy most holy Name Thy loving assistance is given. And even unworthy me, Thou wilt not cast from Thee on account of my sins and my unworthy life" (*ibid.*, c. vii.).

Such is the spirit of St. Gertrude, and such her placid, uneventful life; but a life full of good works and virtues in the sight of God. Learning and piety, such as we find in this convent in the thirteenth century, and the life, the devotions, the spirit that existed there, are all to be found as real and as thorough in convents of the present day. Such souls are not only the defence, but the glory of conventual life.

Our Guardian Angels

ST. CECILIA

NOVEMBER 22, 177 OR 230

"He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways."—Ps. xc. 11.

EVERY child is taught that it has a Guardian Angel; all Catholics believe it, and no doubt most ordinary Catholics sometimes, if not daily, address a prayer to him. But is not this a very paltry recognition of the favour that God has bestowed on us, in appointing one of His blessed spirits to guide us and protect us? It requires faith for us to realize that, though unseen, we each have an Angel, whom we should revere, and in whom we should trust. And according to the faith we have is his power manifested. The Angel is always ready and willing to assist us, but his aid should be invoked, and we should be ready on our part to obey his inspirations. When we remember that perhaps we have dallied with temptation, committed mortal sin, or even lived in sin, utterly regardless of the presence of our Angel, we see how dreadfully we have neglected the aids and safeguards given to our souls by God.

If the devotion of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr, towards her Guardian Angel had been no more fervent than our own, she would not be the great Saint that

she is, no church, no festival would keep her memory alive, no mention of blessed Cecilia in the Sacred Canon of every Mass that is offered up to God. Her Guardian was no more sympathetic nor powerful than our own, but his help was implored and his intervention confided in, and his love was shown in response to the love offered to him by his charge.

We rejoice to find such a proof of this devotion amongst the early Christians, and we reverently recognize the presence of their Angels as a source of so many martyrs' courage and constancy. Cecilia, a rich and noble lady in Rome, was forced to marry, although she had vowed her virginity to God, and Valerian, to whom she was given, was a pagan. Not for one moment did she mean to violate her vow. She disclosed to Valerian the secret that her virginity was consecrated to God, and that she had an Angel to protect both her body and soul. With what unction must she have addressed him, that, heathen though he was, he was awed, and humbly asked that he might see this Angel. Cecilia answered that he must first by faith and baptism become a child of God, and then the vision of the Angel would be vouchsafed to him. Her prayers had obtained for him the good disposition to believe, and she instructed him how to find Bishop Urban hiding in the Catacombs, who would teach him and baptize him. On returning after his baptism to seek Cecilia, full of the ardour of his new-found faith, he was rewarded and amazed at the vision which she had promised him. There was the Virgin absorbed in prayer, and by her side there was the Angel shining in his glory. Falling on his knees in deep emotion, he was consoled by the Angel blessing him as well as Cecilia, and promising them both a crown of glory.

Valerian could not restrain his ardour and his joy, but sought out his brother Tiburtius; and he, too, overcome by their pleadings, was baptized, and to him likewise was granted the vision of the Angel. Their conversion became known, and shortly afterwards they were apprehended, and such was their fortitude and zeal, that Maximus, the officer in charge of them, was converted likewise, and all three lovingly offered the sacrifice of their lives to God. How wonderfully had Cecilia's Guardian Angel proved his power and his love, for the prayers she had offered and the confidence she had reposed in him. And he did not desert her now, when Cecilia had to face the fatal ordeal herself.

Foreknowing that her time was short, she distributed large alms to the poor, and was secretly visited by Urban the Bishop to prepare her for her death. The judge, deeming it best that her martyrdom should be as secret as possible, as she was so well known and popular and loved by the poor, condemned her to be put to death in her own house. He ordered her to be secured in the bathroom of her palace, and the furnaces to be so heated that she should be suffocated. Cecilia was led to the room, fastened in and left there to die. But her Angel was with her, and though enclosed for a day and a night, she was unhurt, though so fierce was the heat that the steam scalded those who opened the doors. The judge, when informed of the marvel, sent an executioner to strike off her head. Three wounds did the axe inflict, but her head was not severed. Then she was left to die, as the law only allowed three strokes, and she lingered for two days, slowly dying, and a few of the faithful secretly gathered round her, and Urban the Bishop, once again. Her

dying request was that the poor, whom she had always loved, were to be cared for, and her house to become a church for ever. Her prayer has been heard, for to this day a noble church stands where Cecilia died.

She had told Valerian that the Angel guarded her, body and soul. Has not her faith been rewarded and her words come true? Her soul was welcomed and safely homed in heaven when she died. And her body was found by Pope Pascal I. in 817 fresh and perfect as when it was laid in its cypress-wood coffin six hundred years before. And again, in 1599, her marble monument was opened, and there were the precious veils that Pope Pascal had spread over her eight hundred years before, and these were withdrawn and the virgin body of the Saint was found lying in the very attitude in which she lay when she breathed her last. She lay clothed in the robes of golden tissue, with the marks of her blood still dimly showing. She looked like one asleep, graceful, and modest, and perfectly incorrupt. Truly for one thousand three hundred years had her Angel guarded that body of the pure and valiant Virgin-Martyr.

The Courage of Faith

ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

NOVEMBER 25, ABOUT 310

"You shall stand before governors and kings for My sake." —MARK xiii. 9.

NOTHING appeals more forcibly to our hearts and wins our admiration than examples of courage and fortitude. And if the heroism is for the sake of others, and performed by a young and gentle maiden, our admiration is all the greater.

For sixteen hundred years has St. Catherine of Alexandria been held up to veneration by the Church as the type of courageous defence and profession of the faith. She was not apprehended, but of her own accord appeared and stood before the Emperor Maximin at Alexandria, where he was cruelly persecuting and putting to death hundreds of Christians. She encouraged and fortified many of them in their afflictions by her fervent exhortations, and then faced the tyrant, upbraiding him for his wicked cruelty, and most wisely pleading for freedom of religion, explaining to him the beauty and holiness of Christianity. He was so amazed and fascinated by the learning, the eloquence, and the beauty of the Saint, that, forgetting his ferocity, he only ordered her to be detained; and then had summoned to him the wisest

of the philosophers and pagan priests of the city. These he instructed that they must refute and convert this wonderful Christian girl, never for a moment doubting that they would do so. The meeting was arranged. The philosophers were most anxious to succeed not only to gain the rewards offered them, but for fear of the Emperor's vengeance if they failed. On the other hand, the holy virgin was rapt in prayer, confiding in that Divine Lord Who had said: "When they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, Who speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 19, 20).

Picture the amazement and rage of the Emperor to witness his clever philosophers first silenced and shamed, and then enthralled by the holy eloquence of Catherine. She so won them over to the faith and love of Christ that they boldly announced that they acknowledged the God of the Christians, and would gladly die for the name of Jesus Christ. A score of them were cast into a huge fire, and there they were immolated—willing victims and professing the faith — whilst Catherine stood by praying for them to be courageous and persevere. Still fascinated by her, the lustful Maximin tried flattery and promises, but she scorned him for the licentious and impious tyrant that he was. Then his fury burst forth, and he ordered the saintly heroine to be stripped and most cruelly scourged with thongs weighted with lead. To reduce her to subjection, she was imprisoned for eleven days without food or drink. But the Holy Spirit was with her still. The Empress and the chief officer of the army, who had doubtless witnessed the conversion of the pagan priests,

visited her in her cell, were instructed by her, received the faith, and afterwards sealed its profession with their blood—martyrs of Christ.

Summoned once more before the tyrant, Catherine appeared, peaceful and radiant, no sign of starvation, no scar of the scourge upon her. The soldiers around, astonished at this wonder, acclaimed her, and rent the air with cries that Christ indeed was God, Who had so manifestly protected His servant. Two hundred of them were butchered there and then by the order of the enraged Emperor, and they died with the name of Christ upon their lips.

Then was the instrument of his subtle vengeance produced—a huge wheel studded with spikes and blades so that the martyr's body, when bound to it, should be stabbed and lacerated and disfigured as it rolled along. When she beheld it, Catherine looked up to heaven and prayed—the prayer of faith is all-powerful—and the great wheel was shattered and fell to pieces. "Earnest prayer and a pure trust in God are the most powerful weapons against the devil." Still more conversions followed this great miracle, and Maximin, hardened in his impiety and cruelty, ordered her to be beheaded, and Catherine bravely went to receive the martyr's crown.

How the fame of that courageous profession of faith has lived throughout all these centuries in the Christian world! A popular Saint, indeed, she has ever been. Many of the Crusaders visited her tomb, and relics of St. Catherine were brought back to Western Europe. A thousand years after her death we have an example of the veneration in which she was held. One who has lately been raised to glory in the Church—blessed Joan of Arc—had St. Catherine for her patron. Joan

too, had to stand before governors and kings for the sake of Christ. And it was St. Catherine who inspired the peasant girl, who gave her the design for her banner —the fleur-de-lis and "Jesus and Mary"; who bade her seek her sword in the Church, dedicated to herself St. Catherine, and there it was found as it had been revealed to her. Blessed Joan had the gift of eloquence, of arousing, of encouraging her compatriots. "For I shall give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay" (Luke xxi. 15). And the Maid of Orleans, like that Maid of Alexandria, had the gift of courage too. And that courage of faith had to endure and win the martyr's crown. Are not our Blessed Lord's words prophetic: "And you shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren, and kinsmen and friends; and some of you they shall put to death" (*ibid.* 16). Blessed Joan endured a cruel and shameful death for the love of Him Who was crucified for her.

These two names—Catherine and Joan—stand for all that is noble in the cause of Christ. Their memories should not only excite our admiration, but should stir our hearts to greater faith and loyalty and endurance in the cause of Him Who is our Master, our Saviour, as well as theirs.

The Cross

ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE

NOVEMBER 30

"If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."—MATT. xvi. 24.

How many good people cheerfully undertake all the other duties of piety, but their hearts fail them at the mention of the Cross. To deny oneself and take up the Cross is a hard saying, and some foolishly expect that God will spare them the ordeal, and they seek in vain for another way to heaven. But this cannot be. As the "Following of Christ" warns us: "Thou must be willing, for the love of God, to suffer all things, labours and sorrows, temptations, vexations, anxieties, necessities, infirmities, injuries, detractions, reproofs, humiliations, confusions, contempt" (Book III., chap. xxxv.). These are the crosses of life. These we must expect; for these we must be prepared. By bearing them patiently and manfully we shall attain to the kingdom of God.

How, then, can we learn best to love instead of fearing the Cross? to gain the strength to carry it instead of fainting and falling under it? to glory in the Cross instead of being ashamed of it? The remedy is: to follow Christ our Lord and keep near Him; to have confidence in obeying Him; to have

loving sympathy for Him. He bore His Cross and died on it for our sakes, surely we should not refuse to bear our cross for His sake.

We find a model for ourselves in attempting this in the blessed Apostle Andrew, the brother of St. Peter. At first he was a disciple of St. John the Baptist, and was with him when John pointed out Christ, and said: "Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. . . . And Andrew the brother of Simon Peter was one of the two" (John i. 36-40). Thus he was the first of the followers of our Lord and Saviour. Later on, when our Blessed Lord saw Andrew and Peter mending their nets, He said: "Follow Me." And they obeyed. They left all things—poor fishermen, indeed, but the little they had was everything to them; they could not make a living without their boats and their nets, but they left them at a word and followed Christ. This was the secret of it. Christ drew them, attracted them, gave them the courage of their faith; and so He would do to any soul that was willing to obey, to give up all and follow Him.

Then began those three years of schooling, of intercourse, of marvelling, of loving, of imbibing the spirit of their Divine Master. They heard Him bless the poor and the humble; they heard Him warn the rich and rebuke the vainglorious and the hypocrites; they saw Him doing good to all, curing the sick, casting out evil spirits, welcoming children, receiving and forgiving publicans and sinners; they were present when He was blasphemed and rejected, when they took up stones to cast at Him, when His enemies sought His life.

He was "the Way and the Life," and if this was

to be the path to heaven, they, too, must be brave enough to face it; and He warned them more than once indeed: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow Me." Those years soon passed, and Andrew was with his Master when He was betrayed and led away to His Death. From afar, amongst the crowd, perhaps he may have witnessed the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the journey to Calvary, perhaps saw the Cross looming against the darkened sky, when it was reared on Calvary's height. Certainly he saw and reverenced the wounds in the hands and feet and side of His risen Saviour, and learned the lesson—thus had Christ to suffer to enter into His glory.

And when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles and brought all things to their minds that Christ had told them, how this lesson of the Cross was impressed upon the soul of Andrew, and he was filled with the sacred enthusiasm of preaching and labouring and dying for his Master. His mission was throughout Scythia, Epirus, and Thrace, and with word of power and miracles he converted multitudes to the faith. During all those years of labour Andrew was looking forward to the holy consummation of laying down his life for His Master. At Patræ in Achaia, where numbers had joined the Church, the governor forbade him to continue to preach the name of Christ. The Apostle boldly withstood him and rebuked him, and when, to save his life, he was told to sacrifice to the gods, he replied, "I offer sacrifice daily to the one Almighty God, the immaculate Lamb on the altar." Cast into prison, the populace aroused could easily have liberated him, had not St. Andrew quelled the angry crowd, and begged of them not to prevent the

sacrifice of his life, which he longed to offer to his Redeemer. When he was condemned to die the death of the Cross, like his blessed Master, his heart overflowed with joy. As he was led to the place of execution and saw the Cross from afar, he cried out: "Hail, precious Cross, thou hast been consecrated by the Body of my Lord! I come to thee, glad and exulting. Oh, good Cross, I have ardently loved thee; long have I desired and sought thee; now thou art found and art made ready for my longing soul. Receive me into thy arms, take me from among men and present me to my Master, that He, Who redeemed me on thee, may receive me from thee." Fervour and love can thus make the Cross sweet and desirable. For two days he lingered, dying on the Cross, praying and preaching, for such was the ardour of his soul, to the crowds around him.

Let us mingle with those around St. Andrew's Cross, and learn from him to put away craven fear, that we may be ready to do and dare when called upon to suffer for Jesus Christ. Let us learn of the Apostle such compassionate love for the Victim of Calvary that we may gladly follow Him, whither he would have us go. If we dread and shrink from the Cross, it is heavy and insupportable; if in love and faith we accept it, the grace of God makes it light and easy to bear, for the love of Him Who died for us upon it.

Zeal for Souls

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

DECEMBER 3, 1552

"For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?"—MARK viii. 36.

WE have in the life of St. Francis Xavier a most wonderful example of the change that the grace of God can work in the soul of man. The contrast between the Apostle of the Indies, as great a wonder-worker as SS. Peter and Paul, and the Francis Xavier, whom St. Ignatius first met in Paris, is most marvellous. Let us see what he was of himself, and what he became by the grace of God. Clever in intellect, winning in manners, pleased with himself and the world, he scarcely seemed one whom the austere, earnest Ignatius, in seeking to found his Order, would have chosen as one of his earliest associates. Francis bantered and rallied Ignatius on the meanness of his dress, his poverty, his strict penitential life; and Ignatius bore it in patience, and meekly replied time after time: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?"

The persevering prayer of blessed Ignatius brought about the marvellous change. For when the vacation time came round, and Francis was free from the lectures he was giving at Beauvais College, he gave himself

completely up to St. Ignatius and made a long retreat. His was not a nature to do things by halves. He realized the emptiness and vanity of his life hitherto; he saw that God was calling him to be generous and give himself to His service, and he nobly did so with total self-abandonment. In proof of this, witness his zeal in attending the sick in the hospital, how he overcame himself and, applying his mouth to the most loathsome ulcer, won a victory over himself that filled his soul with zeal and devotion. And the preparation for his First Mass is another proof. Outside Padua, in a ruined cottage, he spent forty days, exposed to the weather and begging his bread, preparing his soul for the celebration of his first Holy Mass.

St. Ignatius and his companions were disappointed in their projected pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the Sovereign Pontiff commissioned them to instruct and preach in Rome until he should otherwise employ them. It happened at this time that the King of Portugal sought missionaries for the East Indies. Two fathers were chosen, but the future apostle was not one of them. But God had not forgotten him, and on the day before starting, one of the fathers fell ill, and Francis was ordered to take his place. Afterwards St. Francis owned that he had foreseen his labours and sufferings in India and how he longed to go; but he had kept silent when not chosen, and even when appointed, humbly locked up in his own heart the joy and the zeal that consumed him. The long journey to Lisbon overland was undertaken, and so eager was the Saint that he was unwilling to turn aside from the route to bid farewell to his mother. The voyage from Lisbon to Goa, including wintering at Mozambique, took them thirteen months.

The state of religion that he found on landing called forth his tears and his zeal. Among the Portuguese settlers revenge, avarice, usury, debauchery had ruined every sentiment of religion. The native converts had fallen away, shocked at what they beheld in those who should have given them example. St. Francis then began his missionary work with the Christians. In six months the city was reformed by his zeal. Then his apostolate amongst the natives of Ceylon, the mainland, the islands, and even Japan was entered upon. And immediately the words of the Gospel were fulfilled: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. . . . And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 15-18).

Writing to his brethren, he owned that so great were the multitude that he baptized that sometimes, by the bare fatigue of administering the Sacrament, he was scarce able to move his arm. Plagues and diseases of all kinds afflicted these poor people, and great numbers recovered their health on being baptized, or by invoking the most Holy Name of Jesus. Yea, when he even sent his crucifix or beads to touch the sick they were cured. It was at Travancor that God bestowed upon him the gift of tongues. His power over the dead even brought many to believe in Christ. Once, when preaching, and finding that his words produced little effect, he noticed a recent grave near where he was standing. Inspired by God, he fell on his knees and prayed; and then, commanding the buried corpse to arise, behold the dead man stood before them, well and strong. And many others he

raised from the dead to bear witness to the true and living God.

In a letter to Rome he tells how, when sailing to another island, a tempest overtook them, and for three days and nights they were in peril of their lives. When they had given themselves up for lost, St. Francis prayed, and cried, "Great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have mercy on us." And the wind ceased, and the vessel was saved, as had happened to the Apostles when our Blessed Lord had commanded the winds and the waves.

Had St. Francis—this great wonder-worker—forgotten the Francis of former days? No, he who could raise the dead to life, wrote his letters to St. Ignatius, his superior, humbly on his knees! He looked back to those days when his master had to reproach him, "For what shall it profit a man?" and then, with all his heart, he would thank God for His overwhelming graces that had so transformed him.

He had long prayed and endeavoured to obtain a footing in China, in spite of knowing well that death or tortures and imprisonment would be his portion. Every attempt was frustrated. And just when it seemed feasible, and he was to join the suite of the Emperor of Siam, his last illness came upon him. There were no comforts, not even a shelter, for the prostrate invalid. Acute pains and grievous oppression made a victim of his body, but his soul shone through his eyes, and his countenance was serene and joyous, as he felt his end draw nigh. Crucifix in hand and prayer on his lips, he passed away. His last words were: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded for ever."

Only forty-six, and yet what a lifetime of work

had he effected in the last ten years! His wonder-working powers knew no death, and his corpse defied corruption! When it was brought to Malacca, a pestilence suddenly ceased; and when it arrived at Goa, the blind, the crippled, the palsied were cured.

How true is that which he once wrote—true in his own case: "Millions of idolaters might be easily converted if there were more preachers who, with zeal, would seek the glory of Jesus Christ." How the good God repaid the zeal of Francis Xavier! For Christ's sake he had given up the world, in which he had lived and which he had loved; and our Blessed Lord had given him a new world out in the Far East, of which he had become the glorious Apostle.

Spiritual Consolation

ST. BARBARA

DECEMBER 4, 306

"He, that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me."—MATT. x. 37.

WE find amongst the holy Martyrs of the Church varied types of heroism. We read of some so buoyed up with a holy enthusiasm that it seemed no torture could harm them. Others we find staunch with a religious fortitude, giving noble testimony to God, and dying like soldiers on the field of honour. The history of others disclose such pathos that no heart can resist being touched—for instance, the martyrdom of St. Bibiana of Rome. First, her father died a martyr, and then her mother. Then her sister and herself were despoiled of all their wealth, and as they stood in their innocence before the judge, Dafrosa, her sister, fell dead before her eyes. And all alone, blessed Bibiana had to brave the tyrant in defence of her faith and her purity. After cruelties and imprisonment, she was bound to a pillar and scourged to death. But at least she could look up to father and mother and sister praying for and encouraging her to persevere.

How different to this is the case of St. Barbara? No mother, no one except a pagan father, who, finding that his daughter had become a Christian, shut her up

in solitude, upbraided her, and ill-treated her. Would that all who have to suffer for their faith through being converted, through false friends, through losing situations and their living on account of bigotry, in loneliness and poverty, without one to turn to for succour or consolation—would that all such knew of St. Barbara, and prayed to her for help!

Her father, Dioscorus, finding all his cruelty useless against her fortitude, himself brought her before the persecuting judge, and bore testimony against her. He denounced her with such bitterness that the very pagans around were shocked and moved to pity for the maiden. He quoted the law and insisted upon her punishment. Barbara, firm in the faith, prayed for courage to endure, and remembered the words of Jesus Christ: "He, that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." She was tortured in various ways, and each succeeding day, as she was brought forth again, her wounds were all healed, and she stood there, strong and comely, praying for perseverance in the conflict. The judge even was moved, and was weary of such cowardly and useless tyranny, and was willing to dismiss her. But there was one voice—her father's—demanded death; one heart, charged with hatred, was unrelenting; and when, at last, Barbara was condemned to be beheaded, he was triumphant. His exaltation, however, was only short-lived, for no one was willing to strike the fatal blow. Merciless to the last, her own father offered to be the executioner. Poor, forsaken, desolate girl, what horror it must have been to know that her father's hand was ready to slay her! Yet she faltered not in her steadfast love of Christ her Lord, but her dying prayer was that God, in recompense for her utter desolation and abandonment, would

grant the prayers of those who asked for help through her. She meekly bowed her head, and her father, transported with fury, became her murderer. Many were converted at her death, and the multitude was horrified, as the murderer strode away, to witness a flash of lightning strike him dead—"The wrath of God revealed from heaven" (Rom. i. 18).

Reverenced from the earliest times in the Eastern countries, and still a popular Saint in Catholic lands, Barbara is invoked against the danger of lightning, and is regarded as a special patron of a happy death, as a reward of her own father having been her executioner.

Her picture is easily recognized. She is represented with an Angel at each side, and she herself carrying the Host and chalice, ready to succour the dying. It was thus she appeared to St. Stanislaus, when, as a boy, he lay dying, and a priest was denied him, and St. Barbara was privileged to give him the Blessed Sacrament. Another well-authenticated miracle took place in 1448, when a young man was burning to death, and there was no chance of a priest being in time, and he called in his agony on St. Barbara. Oh, happy memory of a holy practice learned in childhood! She immediately appeared, and, throwing her mantle around the scorched and dying youth, kept life and strength within him until he had received the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, when he peacefully expired.

Surely we may trust in the help and intercession of St. Barbara! Whom can we imagine to have a more tender heart of pity for others than that forlorn and desolate virgin, who suffered so much for the love of God, and whose sufferings were so much more intense through the unnatural wickedness of her father? She prayed that all might be heard who invoked her help; and can

the loving, gentle Saviour refuse any prayers of hers? She braved everything for Him, gave up all for Him, and now her joy and glory is to succour the afflicted, the sorrowful, and, above all, the dying, with spiritual consolation, if only they will remember her and ask her aid.

The Efficacy of the Prayer of Forgiveness

ST. STEPHEN

DECEMBER 26

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."—ACTS vii. 59.

THERE is one virtue that each of us must be ready to put into practice when the occasion arises, and very few pass through life without being called upon to practise it in a greater or lesser degree. We are continually praying that we may be enabled to fulfil this duty, and our Blessed Lord has made it a strict condition of our sins being forgiven us. The "Our Father" says: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

There is no substitute whatsoever that can take the place of this duty of forgiving one another. We may be too weak to fast or even abstain, and we can be dispensed. We may live too far from a church, and the obligation of hearing Mass does not bind us on a Sunday. But there is no reason, excuse, subterfuge, or way of escaping this duty of forgiving those who have offended us. Even then, if we appeared to be strict and blameless Catholics, punctual at all religious duties, outwardly models of all that was good, and yet were unforgiving in our heart, all would be useless to secure our salvation.

But this is a poor, sordid, selfish view thus to urge ourselves to practise forgiveness. Let us look at the bright and glorious and heavenly side of this sweet virtue of forgiveness. How to forgive was taught us by the supreme Master of infinite love. He would leave it to no one else to inculcate this blessed lesson. Through life He taught it; at death He emphasized it. He knew His dying words would be treasured in every faithful heart, and its echo ever linger there: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). How paltry do all our wrongs, afflictions, accusations, injustices appear at the foot of the Cross! He, the Crucified Redeemer, could forgive; we, who have perhaps sinned many a time and grievously, knowing well the malice of sin, resent and rebel against the duty of forgiving our neighbour.

It is vain to say by way of excuse that our Blessed Lord was love itself, and that He came to forgive. His disciples did not argue thus, but they learned the lesson thoroughly, and practised it even in the agony of death. Blessed Stephen, the first to die for Christ, gives us an undying lesson in this Christ-like forgiveness, and, more than that, shows us how God loves to accept a prayer for our enemies, blesses it, and grants a wond us answer. The Acts tell us that the Apostles "chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost" (vi. 5), to be the first of the deacons. And, "full of grace and fortitude, he did great wonders and signs among the people" (*ibid.* 8).

His zeal soon aroused enmity. The members of the Synagogue suborned false witnesses, and brought him before the Council. "And all that sat in the council, looking at him, saw his face as if it had been the face of an Angel." Their envy and spite were such that

they were in no disposition to benefit by his words, and, when concluding his address, he said: "You always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you also; . . . you have received the law by the disposition of Angels, and have not kept it;" of the Just One "you have been the betrayers and murderers" (Acts vii. 51-53).

"Hearing these things they were cut to the heart, and gnashed with their teeth at him. But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said: Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. And they crying out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and with one accord ran violently upon him. And casting him forth without the city they stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, invoking and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord. And Saul was consenting to his death" (Acts vii. 54-59).

Such is St. Luke's dramatic account of the death of Stephen. His dying prayer was the echo of our Blessed Lord's, and that self-conquering forgiveness made that prayer precious in the sight of God. And there was one standing there whom it singled out. Saul aided and abetted those murderers. He held their garments, whilst stronger men than himself cast the stones. And was not his tongue a weapon? for it is of him that we read later on in the Acts, "He was breathing out threatenings and

slaughter" (ix. 1), and that "he made havoc of the Church" (viii. 3).

Yet that short, sweet prayer of Stephen overpowered this persecutor. The blessed power of forgiving our brother from our heart! God loves it so that He cannot resist its pleading. The great Apostle St. Paul was won to the Church, and his miraculous conversion is ascribed to the prayer and death of St. Stephen.

We must learn to imitate the glorious example of the blessed Martyr. We must overcome self, though hurt and smarting under wrong, and forgive. We cannot of ourselves, but through the aid of God's grace we can. Prayer will obtain that grace, and whose prayer will be more efficacious than that of St. Stephen? And can we doubt that he will intercede for us when we are trying to honour him by imitating him? This is his glory in heaven, that he has left an example to all Christians to the end of time—an example that has helped very many to forgive, and thus save their souls; that has taught many to pray for those that have wronged them, and that prayer of forgiveness has converted them from their evil ways, and won them over to God.

Charity

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

DECEMBER 27

"Dearly beloved, let us love one another."—1 JOHN iv. 7.

AMONGST all the Saints, is there one to whom we can more confidently turn to teach us the way of perfection than to St. John the beloved disciple? He was the most privileged of men. What opportunities had he enjoyed of learning Divine wisdom and Divine love from our very Lord Himself!

The youngest of the Apostles, he obeyed the call of Christ, "Follow Me," with a ready obedience and a complete surrender of self. For three years he had lived with the Saviour, missing no word of His sublime discourses, noting every act of pity, every miracle of healing, every conversion wrought by faith in His Divine words and commands. What had not his eyes beheld, his hearing drunk in, and his heart responded to in those blessed years of intercourse with his Divine Master? He was known to Peter and the rest as the disciple whom Jesus loved. The youngest, he was chaste and pure when he was called—a virgin then, and a virgin he remained.

He was the one to remember, and in his old age to relate in his Gospel, the discourse of our Lord at the

Last Supper; the one to lay his head on His bosom, and learn of Him who should betray Him; the one who, when his Master was seized and bound, and the rest all fled, followed Him; the one who guarded the Virgin-Mother, and led her to Calvary; the one, faithful to the end, standing by the Cross, to hear that blessed word spoken: "Behold thy son." Blessed word that commended us all to be children of Mary!

On the day of Pentecost John was with St. Peter when he worked his first miracle, and twice was he scourged with him, rejoicing to suffer for Christ's sake. And till our Blessed Lady's death, he took her and cared for her. His must have been the privilege to consecrate the bread and wine—"Do this in commemoration of Me"—and to communicate the Virgin-Mother!

After our Lady's death, we learn that St. John preached the Gospel through Asia Minor, and that all the Churches in Asia were committed to his care and administration. In the year 95 we find him at Rome during the persecution of the Emperor Domitian, when he was cast into the cauldron of boiling oil, from which he emerged unscathed. Then he was banished to the Island of Patmos, where he wrote the Apocolypse, or Book of Revelation, after the wondrous vision of heaven which was vouchsafed to him. After his exile he wrote his first Epistle, and then, at the urgent request of the Bishops and clergy, he wrote his Gospel to prove the Divinity of Christ and silence the blasphemies of Cerinthus and the Ebionites.

Is there anyone, then, to whom our souls may appeal for guidance and wisdom more fitted to teach us than blessed John, Apostle and Evangelist? And what is the summing up of all his teaching? What

do we find over and over again in Gospel and Epistles? What do we find him preaching to the very end in his extreme old age?

His words speak plainly, and no one can gainsay words inspired and enshrined in the Holy Scriptures. Perhaps they may weary us, as they wearied his disciples; but remember they are St. John's words, "and we know that his testimony is true" (John xxi. 24).

He tells us that Christ our Lord said: "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another: as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John xiii. 34). And again: "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John xv. 12). And St. John, in his own person, says: "For this is the declaration that you have had from the beginning, that you should love one another" (1 John iii. 11). And again: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (*ibid.* 14). "My little children," he repeats, "let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (*ibid.* 18). "Dearly beloved, let us love one another: for charity is of God" (*ibid.*, iv. 7). "My dearest, if God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (*ibid.* 11). And, finally, "This commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother" (*ibid.* 21).

Many may remonstrate that there are far more and other lessons to be learned from St. John than this of charity. He himself will answer you. St. Jerome relates that, when age and weakness grew upon him at Ephesus, so that he was no longer able to preach or make long discourses to the people, he used always to be carried to the assembly, and every time said to his flock only these words: "My dear children, love

one another." When his disciples, wearied with hearing constantly the same thing, asked him why he always repeated the same words, he replied: "Because it is the precept of the Lord, and if you do that alone it is enough!" An answer worthy of John the beloved disciple! All his intimate association with Jesus and Mary had taught him, and could not teach him anything higher or more acceptable to God than charity.

St. John's life was in keeping with his words. His charity showed itself in his zeal for the souls of men, reclaiming them from error, idolatry, or vice. St. Clement of Alexandria gives us an instance of this. Preaching once, St. John took notice of a young man, and presented him afterwards to the Bishop of the city, recommending him in the Name of Christ to his care. The young man was received and cared for at the Bishop's house, instructed, and confirmed. Alas! he was allured away, and joined wicked and debauched associates, and, stifling all remorse, he put himself at the head of a band of robbers. Some time after, on his journeys, St. John found himself once again in this same city. He asked the Bishop for the soul that he had entrusted to him in the Name of Christ. The Bishop explained how he had fallen away, and the depth of his wickedness now. St. John, in grief, upbraided him. "Oh, what a guardian have I provided to watch over a brother's soul!" He procured a horse, and rode away to the hiding-place of the robbers. They seized him. "It is for this I came," said St. John. "Lead me to your captain." As soon as he recognized the Saint, the robber, in confusion and terror, took to flight. St. John forgot his old age, and pursued him and captured him. "Why do you fly from your father, unarmed and an old man? Have

compassion on me. There is room for repentance. I will answer for you to Jesus Christ. I am ready to lay down my life for you, as Jesus did for us all. I will pledge my soul for yours if you repent." Such love could not fail to soften the hardest heart. His conversion was most sincere. His tears were a second Baptism, as St. Clement says, and St. John, returning with him, restored him to the Church, and remained there for some time, encouraging and strengthening him in his new and penitential life.

St. John's life, then, corroborated his words: "He loved in deed and in truth." Let us pray to him for his spirit, lest we deceive ourselves and imagine that we love God and are pleasing to Him. Let us test ourselves. "If God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Self-Surrender and Trust in God

SISTER TERESA, CARMELITE OF LISIEUX

1873-1897

"For of such is the kingdom of God."—MARK x. 14.

THERE is no intention in this short sermon of anticipating the decision of Holy Church about the sanctity of this young Carmelite nun. The time has not yet arrived for the Church to beatify or canonize one so recently deceased. We can simply call to mind the virtues she practised, and, thanking God for the favours received, by invoking her help hope that some day soon we may reverence them as genuine miracles.

The life of Sister Teresa is of the liveliest interest to us, because she lived and died in our own days—1873-1897. So young, and yet to be so deeply learned in the wisdom of Christ; so unknown and obscure in life, and now in so short a time to be known all over the world, for her life has been translated into nine or ten languages, and faithful souls are praying to her and imitating her in every part of the universe.

The ninth child in a holy family, Marie Françoise Térèse Martin was born at Alençon on January 2, 1873. She lost her mother when very young. Four of the children died, and the other five, all sisters, entered the religious life. The lonely father willingly sacrificed

them to the service of God. A dangerous illness occurred during her childhood, and though the doctors had lost hope, she was cured by our Blessed Lady, who appeared to her. Wise beyond her years, she prepared with the utmost care and eagerness for her First Communion and Confirmation. Already the aspiration to become a Carmelite, as were most of her sisters, was constantly in her mind, and the object of her constant prayers. The waiting, until her age warranted the Superiors to accept her, was a grievous trial and suffering to her ardent and longing soul.

This was but the beginning of her trials; for when at length she was admitted and had bravely assumed the garb of penance and obedience, how different everything became! All the delight of prayer and devotion dried up within her; her heart was desolate. But she never faltered under her trials. Young as she was, she knew that sufferings were the royal road to heaven. "Jesus wishes me to be an orphan," she wrote. "He wishes me to be alone with Him, in order to unite Himself the more intimately to me."

Towards the end of her short life she was commanded by her Superior to write her life, or, rather, an account of her graces and the dealings of our Blessed Lord with her soul. It was not for a moment meant for publication; until after her death the fragrance of her holiness rendered it advisable. We are thus enabled to obtain glimpses into the very soul of this "little one so dear to Christ."

One sentence about mortification is in itself a lesson that will last us our lifetime. She grieves that she could not emulate the austerities of the Saints, and owns that her penances consisted in breaking her own will; in keeping back a sharp word; in doing little

services to others without display! How different would the world not be—how different even good Catholics—if they constantly practised these three little penances!

She tells us likewise how she used to pray. "I simply tell the good God what I want. He never fails to understand me. For me, prayer is an outburst of the heart, a glance upwards towards heaven, a cry of gratitude or love, or, in short, anything that raises the soul to God. Sometimes, when my mind suffers so much from dryness that not a single good thought occurs, I just say the "Our Father" or the "Hail Mary" very slowly. I need no other prayers; these suffice, and are a Divine food for my soul."

Her trust, her childlike confidence in God, is one of the most remarkable traits in her character. "If I draw nigh to God with love and trust," she writes, "it is not that I have been kept from mortal sin. Were my conscience laden with every imaginable crime, I should not have one whit less confidence! Heartbroken and repentant, I should throw myself into my Saviour's arms. He loves the Prodigal Son. I know His words to Magdalen, to the adulterous woman, and to her of Samaria. Who could make me afraid? I know His mercy and His love! I know all my numberless sins would disappear in an instant, like a drop of water cast into a furnace. Jesus asks no great things of us—self-surrender and gratitude, and no more. . . . To see Jesus so long-suffering, so forbearing to me, is enough to make me die of gratitude and love."

We may ask ourselves how had she acquired, how had she deserved to have such exalted trust and love of God? Because of her self-surrender. She kept

nothing back from God. He was Master of her whole heart. This she owned quite simply, saying: "I have never refused what God asked me." It is these little revelations of her soul that show us in a moment the wide, wide contrast between ourselves and this generous, loving nun.

Though her life was passed enclosed within the convent walls, her soul was filled with zeal. "There is only one thing to do here below—to love Jesus and to save souls for Him that He may be loved. My desire is to work for the Church and for souls." We should deeply regret that her life was so short, that at the age of twenty-four God called her to Himself, had she not explained to us that her work was not to be ended by death, but rather that she would be enabled to work all the more for souls and God's glory. When death was drawing nigh, she wrote: "My heart thrills to think of the love that will be mine—mine to receive, mine to give! My mission, which is to make men love God, and to point out my little path to heaven, will shortly commence. The path is absolute trust in God and self-surrender. I will spend my heavenly life in doing good on earth. And why not? The Angels, though they enjoy the beatific vision, watch over us notwithstanding."

Epitaphs are not always very truthful—perhaps love for the dead is the cause of foolish praise—but if we visited Sister Teresa's grave, we should find on the simple cross that marks the spot the very truth recorded: "I wish to pass my heaven in doing good on earth."

In the few years that have passed since 1897, how wonderfully has she proved that she is fulfilling her wish—doing good on earth! From all over the world

grateful letters are being received at the convent of Lisieux for favours received from "little Sister Teresa" —for cures effected, prayers answered, and, most of all, acknowledgments of the fervour and peace which reading her life or praying to her bring to the soul.

Here is a heavenly friend showing us her path heavenwards! Here is a friend desirous of helping us along, bidding us remember her example—self-surrender and childlike trust in Jesus Christ our Lord.